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Among the stars in the Indian political firmament who illumined the path of progress and freedom over the latter part of the last century, Pherozeshah Mehta was one of the brightest. Born in 1845, he had the benefit of English education early in life. He graduated at the young age of twenty and, in recognition of his brilliance, was allowed to appear for his Master's Degree only six months later. He passed the M.A. examination and sailed for England the same year to qualify for the Bar.

On his return in the early seventies, he was made a Justice of the Peace. Soon, he engaged himself in the municipal affairs of Bombay city and worked for many civic reforms. In 1893, he was elected to the Bombay Legislative Council and subsequently, to the Imperial Council. However, it was as a Congressman that he made political history. He was one of the founders of the Indian National Congress and was elected its President in 1890. His association with the Congress continued till his last breath.

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Builders of Modern India

PHEROZESHAH MEHTA

HOMI MODY

PUBLICATIONS DIVISION
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

October 1967 (Asvina 1889)

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CONTENTS

	Page
I. Early Years	1
II. Life in England	7
III. Early Years at the Bar	13
IV. Political Apprenticeship	19
V. Municipal Reform Agitation	26
VI. The Administration of Lord Lytton ..	41
VII. The Ilbert Bill	46
VIII. Civic Honours	54
IX. The Birth of the Congress	61
X. The Municipal Act of 1888	66
XI. Professional Successes	71
XII. Leader of the Congress	76
XIII. Government and the Corporation	87
XIV. In the Bombay Council	92
XV. Work in the Imperial Council	97
XVI. Resignation from the Council	117
XVII. Visit to England	124
XVIII. Pherozeshah and Gokhale	129
XIX. Pherozeshah and the Congress	136
XX. University Reform	144
XXI. Official Recognition	148
XXII. The Caucus	155
XXIII. The Surat Congress and After	162
XXIV. The Morley-Minto Reforms	177
XXV. Lord Sydenham and the University ..	181
XXVI. Visit to Europe	186
XXVII. Closing Years	190
Final	213

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Chapter I

EARLY YEARS

1845—1864

OF the early years of the lives of eminent Indians very little is known as a rule. Nor, as circumstances exist at present, would a narration of them evoke much interest or possess any special value. It will be necessary, therefore, to skip lightly over the opening pages of the life-story of the remarkable Indian who is the subject of this biography.

Pherozeshah Mehta was born in Bombay on August 4, 1845. His father was a merchant who spent most of his life in Calcutta, and was at one time a partner in the well-known firm of P. & C. N. Cama & Co., which, with many other business houses, came to grief in the Share Mania of 1865. He was a man of means at the period of which we are speaking, and was able to bring up his children in comfort. Though not endowed with any education worth the name, he possessed some literary tastes, and was the author of a text-book on Geography and a Gujarati translation of some work on Chemistry. His brother Sorabji was a man of considerable ability who held a responsible position in a banking concern, and was keenly interested in the social and educational questions of the day.

The family lived in one of the localities in the Fort which were in those days inhabited by the wealthiest in the community, and most of which are now known only for their squalor and general indications of poverty. It is not necessary to delve deeper than this into the family history in order to trace influences of heredity or environment, which, as a present day critic says, are often a snare to the

biographer.

When he was about seven years old, Pherozeshah was taken seriously ill from a malignant fever. For days together, he lay unconscious and his life was despaired of. Dr. Bhau Daji, the celebrated physician, attributed the particular nature of the child's malady to his quick and restless brain, and remarked that if he recovered, he would turn out to be a great man, a prophecy which had also been made by his uncle Sorabji on seeing the child's forehead when he was in the cradle. After days of agonizing suspense, the family tradition runs, the little patient suddenly woke up one day, bitterly crying. When asked for the reason, he sobbed that he had seen his grandmother in a garden full of flowers, and that she had given him a push and turned him out. The old folks in the family regarded it as a happy omen, and from that moment the child began to recover.

Pherozeshah's early education began in what was known as Ayrton's school. This was an institution established by Mr. Dhunjibhoy Cama, one of the partners of the elder Mehta, and honoured with the name of Ayrton, who was the family solicitor of the Camas, and who took a great interest in the education of boys.

From Ayrton's school, Pherozeshah went in 1855 to that well-known institution called the "Branch School", the cradle of many distinguished men who have made history in Bombay. After six happy years spent in an irresponsible and happy-go-lucky way, characteristic of all healthy minded school boys, he passed the Matriculation examination, which had been instituted soon after the great charter of education of 1854 was brought into operation. Shortly after, he joined the Elphinstone College, then located in a place at Gowlia Tank Road, known as "Tankerville".

Of Pherozeshah's life at College, there is not much to be said. He was a keen and diligent student, particularly fond of history and English literature, and showed himself to be endowed with a mind of unusual capacity.

His personality was striking. Though of little more than medium height, his strong and handsome features and broad shoulders lent considerable dignity and impressiveness to his general appearance. His conversation was brilliant, and drew towards him a large circle of friends. Among them were several who in after years stood with him on the same platform on many an occasion, and fought under his banner.

Young Pherozeshah also became a favourite with the great educationist who was at the head of the institution, Sir Alexander Grant. One of the essays written by him so impressed the latter that it was ordered to be preserved in the archives of the College from which some devoted disciple may some day unearth it.

In the annual reports which were sent to his father over the signature of Sir Alexander, his conduct and progress were described as excellent. He was quick at grasping the salient points of the subject before him, but avoided the shortcuts to knowledge which such facility often encourages. He belonged to that somewhat rare type of men in whom great natural advantages are found allied with a capacity for taking pains.

While the cultivation of the mind was promoted in every way, the development of the body was not neglected. Though little inclined to any vigorous physical exertion, Pherozeshah was fond of cricket, and played a great deal of what was then a little-known game. He is said to have played in characteristic fashion, never knowing when he was defeated. Sir Alexander was himself fond of the game,

and encouraged its pursuit among his pupils. On one occasion, he even took a team with him to the Deccan, Pherozeshah forming one of the Eleven.

Those years at College were well spent. They taught the young man to stand upright; they certainly fostered no "slave mentality". They were devoted to the cultivation of a mind which was very receptive, and to the pursuit of a healthy outdoor life. The opportunities for the acquisition of culture which existed in those days, the attention that it was possible to bestow on each student and the sympathetic understanding which existed between the professors and their pupils, all contributed to bring out the best that was in a man, and in such an atmosphere Pherozeshah's intellect ripened early. He had the rare advantage, beside, of coming under the influence of Sir Alexander Grant's inspiring personality, and the value of this early association he repeatedly acknowledged in after years.

In 1864, Pherozeshah passed his B.A. examination, and was awarded a Dakshina Fellowship by Sir Alexander, who was anxious to retain his connection with the College. About this time, he received a compliment which was as rare as it was gratifying in those days. Sir Bartle Frere, having heard about him, was desirous of meeting him, and asked him to an interview at Government House. What transpired at the interview is not known.

A few months later, an event of far-reaching importance took place in the life of Pherozeshah. The late Mr. Rustomji Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, the second son of the first Parsi Baronet, and a man of remarkably enlightened views and catholic philanthropy, had offered in December 1863 a sum of Rs. 1,50,000 in trust "to enable five natives of India to proceed to England for the purpose of qualifying

themselves for practice at the Bar in India". When applications were invited for the scholarship Sir Alexander induced Pherozeshah to put forward his candidature, though his father had some misgivings about the propriety of his son accepting the benefit of a charitable trust, and wanted him to adopt a commercial career. Sir Alexander pointed out that it was in fact an honour to be selected as a candidate, and the elder Mehta gave in.

In forwarding the gifted pupil's application, the eminent educationist wrote in terms of warm appreciation of his talents and character:

"I have great pleasure in testifying that Mr. Pherozeshah Merwanji is in every way worthy of the benefaction which he seeks. He is on the whole the best student of all I have had to do with in the Elphinstone College. He has good abilities, industry, good sense, modesty, an excellent moral character, and remarkably gentlemanly and pleasing manners. From much association with him on the cricket field as well as in the lecture room, I can testify to his manliness and courage, which, I think, the committee will consider valuable qualifications. I beg you will lay before them this letter, and say to them with all respect that should their choice fall upon Mr. Pherozeshah Mehta, I should cordially congratulate the honourable founder of this benefaction on the worthy character of the young man selected to represent himself and the Parsee community in England".

The choice of the committee happily fell upon Pherozeshah—in Calcutta the late Mr. W. C. Bonnerji was selected—and as Sir Alexander was going to England in December 1864, and was desirous of taking his pupil with him, the latter was allowed as a special grace to appear for his M.A. within six months of his passing the B.A. exami-

nation. The task was not an easy one, but those who knew him felt sure of his success. Their confidence was justified, and Pherozeshah became one of the first M.A.'s of the Bombay University.

After weeks of preparation befitting the importance of the occasion—a visit to Europe was looked on as a bit of an adventure in those days—Pherozeshah sailed for England in December 1864.

GANDHI SMARAKA
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Chapter II

LIFE IN ENGLAND

1865—1868

THERE were not many Indians in London at the time, but they were congenial spirits. Circumstanced as they were, they were thrown much into each other's society. None the less, they moved about largely, and saw a great deal of the world around them. The dress that Pherozeshah and his immediate associates affected, though elegant, was a curious compromise between Western and Eastern ideas.

A friend who saw them sailing down Oxford Street one day found them "very sprucely dressed up in the height of fashion, except that they had put on an oriental sort of head-dress—being dainty little black velvet caps, gay with long flowing blue silk tassels attached to a button fixed in the centre at the top, from which radiated some skeins of silk".

The head-gear was intended as a compliment to Dadabhai Naoroji, who exercised a great influence over the minds of the young Indians, and was a guide, philosopher and friend to them. Before he became a member of Parliament he always went about in London plainly dressed in a long black broadcloth coat buttoned at the neck, and with his head covered by a black velvet cap with a small blue tassel.

Pherozeshah and his companions had at first adopted this costume but when, yielding to the dictates of fashion, they dressed themselves up in the mode of the day, they

retained the cap as a compliment to the guru. It was a somewhat outlandish combination, but it procured for the young dandies a certain amount of attention which was by no means unacceptable.

Whilst in London, Pherozeshah was very friendly with Mr. and Mrs. D. D. Cama, at whose house he was a most welcome guest. Many Parsis in London gravitated to that delightful place in the country on Sundays, where, among other enjoyments, they were treated to a dinner cooked in the Parsi fashion. The typically Indian game of *chaupat* formed the principal amusement at these weekly gatherings. Pherozeshah was an adept at the game, in which the fun is apt to become faster and more furious, the more heavily one bangs the board with the pieces. So great were the excitement and noise round the *chaupat* board that Mr. Cama's neighbour one day inquired why it was that he was always engaged on Sundays in hanging pictures!

Pherozeshah was the outstanding figure at this and other gatherings. He took the lead in everything that was done, and his company looked to him for direction, as to one who was born to command. He was the *arbiter elegantiarum,* and his right to lay down the law was conceded without question. He was the most agreeable of companions, and his versatile talents, charm of manner and skill at various games assured him a warm welcome everywhere.

Apart from his legal studies, Pherozeshah devoted some time to the study of French, with which he soon picked up a fair acquaintance. He read a great deal of French Literature of the period of the Revolution, and was a warm admirer of Mirabeau and the other great actors in that earth-shaking drama.

Besides the company that has been mentioned, there were also about this time in London several Indians, who

were destined to leave the impress of their personality on the country. They were gifted young men, and they made the most of their opportunities.

Jamsetjee Tata, after many vicissitudes of fortune, lived to become a great captain of industry, and the pioneer of India's industrial awakening. Man Mohun Ghosh distinguished himself as a lawyer and politician during the comparatively short span of life that was allotted to him.

Budruddin Tyabji enjoyed an immense practice at the Bar, rose to the Bench, and carried with him there the qualities which had given him an honoured place among the leaders of the people. W. C. Bonnerji became a lawyer and a leader of unquestioned eminence, and his massive personality lent distinction to the public life of Bengal.

All these young men used to meet at Dadabhai's place, where Pherozeshah came closely in contact with them. This intimate association was of considerable value to him, and laid in the case of Bonnerji the foundations of a political friendship which was of the greatest benefit to India in the days when they and other devoted patriots strove to implant in her the seeds of new ideas, and the impulse towards a higher life.

It was a memorable epoch in the history of England and the world. Carlyle, Ruskin, Mill, Darwin, Herbert Spencer—to mention only a few of the great teachers of the age—delivered their message, and humanity felt profoundly shaken in its beliefs, ideas and dogmas. "Mazzini and Victor Hugo imparted activity, elevation and the generous breadth of cosmopolitan outlook to the most ardent spirits of the new time in our own island"

In politics, Liberalism made its appearance as a stimulating and powerful factor in national progress. Cobden and Bright and Gladstone breathed a new spirit into the

political controversies of the day. Across the Atlantic, "humanity fought one of its most glorious battles", and the curse of slavery was put an end to. A revolution was sweeping over men's thoughts and ideas, and in the words of Lord Morley, "only those whose minds are numbed by the suspicion that all times are tolerably alike, and men and women much of a muchness, will deny that it was a generation of intrepid effort forward".

It was in such an atmosphere that Pherozeshah imbibed those principles which ever afterwards governed his public career. Contact with all that was healthy in Western life and thought instilled into him a breadth of view, courage, independence of thought and a love of ordered progress, allied with a certain conservatism which lies at the root of the British character.

He developed early those traits which raised him so greatly above his countrymen, and displayed a maturity of thought which impressed all who came in contact with him. He took a keen interest in the problems of the day, particularly as they affected his country, and was one of the most active members of the East India Association, which was founded by Dadabhai Naoroji in October 1866, "for the independent and disinterested advocacy and promotion by all legitimate means of the interest and welfare of India generally".

The Association owed its existence to the support of many enlightened Indian princes, which Dadabhai was able to secure for it on his return to India for a brief period after the commercial crash which had involved among others the firm of which he was a partner. The organization, until it was captured by retired Anglo-Indian officials, did yeoman service in stimulating political activity among Indians and educating English opinion about the problems

of India. Its annual reports contain a treasure-house of information on a multitude of subjects, and may be read with profit even at the present day.

Before this Association, Pherozeshah read a paper on 'The Educational System in the Presidency of Bombay', which evoked warm praise from a small but appreciative audience. It was characterized as an "able, clever and elaborate paper", and the young lecturer was asked to embody his views in a series of resolutions to be brought up again for discussion.

After defining the true aims of Indian education, Pherozeshah went on to express his conviction that for a long time to come elementary education of the masses must give place to a high liberal education. True, the latter would be confined to a handful of men, but he declared that the history of every great movement in the progress of civilization and of all the reformations and revolutions showed that it is these few men who do the work of uplifting the masses, and who, endowed with real earnestness, deep thought and comprehensive insight, create and mould the new ideas, and transfer them thus ready-made to the multitude, to be received by them on their authority and example.

To this view he clung with tenacity throughout his long career. Equally strong was his conviction that the vernaculars of the country were unsuited to become the vehicles of a liberal education, and that English ought consequently to be the principal medium of imparting knowledge. The controversies which centred round such questions in those days cannot be said to have lost their interest even at the present moment.

This was not Pherozeshah's only incursion into the controversies of the day. He took an active and intelligent

interest in the various public questions, which enabled those who came in contact with him to understand and appreciate his gifted personality.

Among those who formed a high opinion of his capacity was Professor Key, who in 1868 wrote to Pherozeshah in terms of generous appreciation such as may well have flattered the latter. "Already entertaining a very high opinion of your race in general", wrote the great Latinist, "I must say without flattery that I found in you something exceeding all my expectations; and I look forward to your playing an important part in India, especially in procuring for the Parsees, and I hope the Hindoos also, as well as others, a status in society more worthy of them. Keep this grand object in view, and do your best to attain eminence at the Bombay Bar, for, I feel sure, you have qualities, both natural and acquired, that may enable you to do so."

This was on the eve of Pherozeshah's departure from England. He had been called to the Bar in Easter Term in 1868 and had been received at the Benchers' Table.

After some time, with the good wishes of those who were taking a sympathetic interest in his career, and to the regret of his intimate associates, who felt that life was losing much of its savour by his departure, Pherozeshah sailed for India in September 1868. Those four years which he had spent in England had been among the happiest in his life, and had equipped him with much that went to the making of his remarkable public career.

Chapter III

EARLY YEARS AT THE BAR

1868—1876

ON the way out, Pherozeshah made the acquaintance of an Englishman occupying high office in India, Mr. William Wedderburn (as he then was), one of the most earnest and disinterested champions of its interests that this country has ever known. Through the good offices of the latter, the young barrister was on his return made a Justice of the Peace, and thus given an early opportunity of acquainting himself with the municipal affairs of the city, which were then vested in the hands of the Bench of Justices.

Pherozeshah lost no time in settling down to the work of his profession. He rented chambers in a somewhat rickety old house in Apollo Street, where the inevitable period of waiting for briefs that seemed a long time in coming was enlivened by the excellent company that gathered there every day after the day's work was over.

In those days, the High Court was located in a building occupied later by the Great Western Hotel. The Appellate Court with its various establishments was at Mazagon. At the head of the Judiciary was Sir Richard Couch, an eminent judge, who was supported by able colleagues, and by a Bar which included that eccentric genius, T. C. Anstey.

The little group of briefless juniors, which spent its time mostly in the corridor or the common room, had an uphill task before it. It is true the profession was not

overcrowded, and competition in the sense in which it is understood now did not exist. But the entire practice was more or less concentrated in the hands of a few eminent counsel, such as Anstey, Scoble, Green, Latham, White, Mariott, and one or two others. It was a very difficult thing either to dislodge them from their position, or even to carry away a few crumbs from their richly-laden table.

The indifference of attorneys and the haughtiness of seniors did not, however, weigh on the spirits of the gay little coterie that daily met in Pherozeshah's chambers. They were spirited young men, full of the *joie de vivre*, and they divided their time between tea parties, political discussions and practical jokes.

One of the unwritten rules of the company was that each newcomer on his arrival was to entertain his colleagues to dinner. These functions were usually held in a private room at Old Pallonji's Adelphi Hotel, situated at Byculla, which was then a fashionable locality. It was the first hotel in Bombay worth the name, and through the personality of its old proprietor, familiar to hosts of Englishmen and Indians in all parts of the Presidency, it had come to be regarded as an institution. The dinners were highly popular and promoted friendly intercourse. One of the newcomers, Homi Bennett, contrived to avoid the function, however. A citation on a printed form obtained from the Sheriff's office, and drawn up in all the ponderous legal phraseology, was issued, requiring the culprit to appear "at the bar of the Dinner Tribunal, *coram* Pherozeshah Mehta", to show cause why he should not be put out of caste. A court-peon was got to serve the rule on him, as he sat one afternoon in one of the courts whilst the "Tribunal" awaited results in the common-room. They had not long to wait. Following on the service of the

citation, the newcomer who was of a very irascible temperament, and unable to appreciate a joke, rushed up in a towering rage, made straight for Pherozeshah, caught hold of him, and threatened to throw him out of one of the windows overlooking the old ice-house, one of the landmarks of Bombay that has since disappeared. Prompt and vigorous intervention prevented a fight, however, and harmony was ultimately restored by the delinquent offering reparation in the shape of a modest lunch washed down with a hock-cup.

Those were happy days indeed. In later years men saw much of Pherozeshah at various places, at the Ripon Club, the Presidency Association and the chambers at Esplanade Road which became a regular *salon*. They found him courteous, affable and full of genial humour. But nowhere did he give such play to his fancies and ready wit as he used to do in that choice circle of early friends, full of the hopes and ambitions of youth.

The time during which Pherozeshah had to cool his heels was not wasted by him. He was very regular in his attendance in the various courts, and assiduous in his study of text-books and reports. He attracted to himself the favourable notice of Justices Westropp and Bailey, the latter of whom was very sympathetic and hospitable to the little contingent of Indian barristers.

Off the Court, Pherozeshah amused himself by writing in various journals, including *The Indian Statesman*, a paper founded by that "Bayard of Indian Journalism", Robert Knight. He set himself up occasionally as a drama critic, being fond of the theatre, and once invited on himself a very scurrilous attack from one of the outraged dramatists whom he had criticized. With the aid of Dady Patel, a scion of a very respectable family, with

whom threatricals were an obsession, he stage managed several amateur performances got up in aid of local charities.

By slow degrees, work began to flow in the direction of Pherozeshah and his friends. The atmosphere which surrounded the young men began to be less frigid, as gradually Anstey, Mariott, Macpherson, Scoble and others showed themselves friendly to them.

The process of climbing up was, nevertheless, somewhat slow, and in the struggle several gave up practice at the Bar, and succumbed to the little temptations that were held out to them. In this way, some of the close and constant companions of Pherozeshah were snapped up, and the Bar knew them no more. From the first, Pherozeshah, confident in his abilities, had determined not to be turned aside by any considerations whatsoever from the pursuit of his profession.

Pherozeshah's confidence was ultimately justified, for his abilities, powers of exposition, and skill in cross-examination began to compel recognition, and attorneys started taking notice of the promising young counsel.

One of the earliest cases which brought him into prominence was the celebrated Parsi Towers of Silence case, which excited public interest for weeks on end. He had the good fortune to be Anstey's junior in that case. That remarkable man, though not very pleased at first with the idea of having an inexperienced Indian briefed with him, soon came to form a high opinion of Pherozeshah though he could not quite reconcile himself to the latter's massive turban. In Anstey's opinion, publicly expressed, his brilliant junior had "all the germs of future eminence in him".

But it was, after all, mofussil practice that laid the

foundations of Pherozeshah's remarkable success at the Bar. From an early period, Gujarat and Kathiawar began to requisition the services of the young lawyer who had a habit of giving his opponents an uncomfortable time and who stood no nonsense from even the most arbitrary judge or magistrate.

The Surat Riot case, which arose from the introduction of the Licence Tax in the seventies, securely established the reputation he was making, and placed him at once in the front rank of mofussil practitioners. The ability, resourcefulness and forensic eloquence which he displayed in the case made his name famous throughout Gujarat, and briefs began to pour in from all quarters.

That settled the direction of his professional career, which thereafter lay largely in the mofussil, though, if he had chosen to, he could have commanded an extensive practice in Bombay, where clients were no less eager to engage his services. But with his growing public engagements, it suited him to cultivate mofussil practice, which was by no means as exacting as work in the High Court, and equally lucrative.

His professional engagements took him to all parts of the Presidency, and familiarized him with the modes and habits of life and thought of people of all conditions. Facilities for travel and accommodation were very inadequate in those days when the railway had not penetrated to all parts of the country, and a good deal of roughing had to be done, to which Pherozeshah, who had not developed the extreme fastidiousness of his later years, readily submitted.

Among other places, he went sometimes to the Chief Commissioner's Court at Mount Abu. The journey had

to be made from Ahmedabad, *via* Deesa, in a *dumni* cart drawn by bullocks. In the hot season, the intense heat of the scorching plains of Rajputana made travelling by day very uncomfortable; so the *Dumni* used to roll on all night, discharging its burden at some indifferent rest-house or dak bungalow, where the day was spent in rest and sleep.

Discomfort and fatigue, however, made no difference to Pherozeshah's habits. He always had his bath in the morning and scrupulously performed his toilet, which was a somewhat elaborate affair even in those days. It gave him a good appetite for breakfast, which he enjoyed despite the heat and tedium of the journey. The only thing he disliked was physical exertion, which, after his college days, he carefully avoided.

The atmosphere in which Pherozeshah moved was stimulating in many ways and gave tone to his character and mental attitude. The Bar in his time was energetic, and jealous of its rights and privileges. In 1871, when the Indian Evidence Act was on the anvil, it sent up a strong protest to the then Viceroy, the Earl of Mayo, against some of the provisions of the Bill, which by implication cast a reflection on the integrity and independence of the legal profession in India.

The distinguished jurist who drafted the Act, Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, though he complained of the uncompromising vigour of the strictures of the Bombay Bar, thought it prudent, however, to drop the objectionable clauses.

Chapter IV

POLITICAL APPRENTICESHIP

THOUGH his circumstances and habits of life made it necessary for Pherozeshah to build up a substantial income, from his youth he had determined to devote himself to public affairs. It was not long after his return from England that he was admitted to the ranks of those who were striving to infuse political activity into a city more or less absorbed in the pursuit of commerce and industry.

At a public meeting held in Bombay under the chairmanship of Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, second Baronet of that name, the Bombay Branch of the East India Association was launched into existence amidst considerable enthusiasm. The Bombay Association, which had as its secretary that rugged and sternly independent publicist, Naoroji Furdunji, who was known as "the tribune of the people", had done useful work in championing Indian interests, but had ceased for some time to be an active political force.

The new organization had somewhat different objects in view. In the words of its founder, Dadabhai Naoroji, it was to act simply as a messenger and an agent of the parent institution. In after years, when the latter ceased to represent the ideas and ambitions of its early founders, the possession of the funds of the Bombay branch became the subject of a bitter controversy, which arose out of the character of agency stamped upon it on its foundation. Pherozeshah and Bal Mangesh Wagle were appointed the first secretaries of the new Association.

The first public activity of the new recruit to the ranks of political workers was in the direction of organizing a testimonial to Dadabhai Naoroji in recognition of the eminent services he was rendering to India. The Grand Old Man was then in the early stages of a career, whose inspiration was to touch an ever-widening circle and to witness at its culmination the triumph of the principles which were the mainsprings of its activities for more than half a century. The people of India already recognised in him an unflinching champion of their interests, and the testimonial got up by the citizens of Bombay was but one of the many proofs of their confidence and regard.

To the pleasant task of making it worthy of the recipient, Pherozeshah applied himself with energy, and his labours and those of others, backed by an enthusiastic public, resulted in the collection of a handsome amount, which was presented as a purse to Dadabhai in July 1869, at a meeting largely attended by all classes and communities, and which might be regarded as the first representative gathering of the citizens of Bombay. It was entirely characteristic of the man that, poor as he was, he devoted later on the whole of that sum to the furtherance of the causes which were so dear to his heart.

About this time, public attention was focussed on a controversy which dragged on for more than half a century during which the question of the larger admission of Indians into the ranks of Government Service occupied the foremost place among the political problems of this country.

The Act of 1833 had laid down in emphatic terms the principle of equality, and declared that "no native of the said territories, nor any natural-born subject of His Majesty resident therein, shall, by reason only of his religion, place of birth, descent, colour, or any of them, be

disabled from holding any place, office or employment under the said Company".

The question had been earnestly considered at the time of this declaration, and sympathy towards the legitimate ambitions and aspirations of Indians was expressed by Sir Robert Peel, Lord Landsdowne and other British statesmen. The subject was again to the fore in 1853, and among the measures suggested for introducing a larger Indian element in the administration was a proposal for holding simultaneous examinations in England and India.

A departmental committee of the India Office accordingly went into the question in 1860, and declared that it was not only just but expedient that the natives of India should be employed in the administration of India to as large an extent as possible, consistently with the maintenance of British supremacy. After observing that no positive disqualification of Indians existed even at that time, the Committee went on to say:

"Practically, however, they are excluded. The law declares them eligible, but the difficulties opposed to a native living in India and residing in England for a time are so great that, as a general rule, it is almost impossible for a native successfully to compete at the periodical examinations held in England. Were this inequality removed, we should no longer be exposed to the charge of making a promise to the ears and breaking it to the heart."

The end of all the agitation carried on for some years was the introduction by Sir Stafford Northcote of the East India Bill, clause 6 of which empowered the authorities in India to appoint Indians to any office, place or employment, even though they had not been admitted to the Civil Service of Her Majesty in India. In other words,

instead of the principle of competition upon equal terms which was demanded, a principle of selection was introduced, which could not but be arbitrary in its working, let alone its other objectionable features.

The Bill had a somewhat mixed reception. In a paper read before the Bombay branch of the East India Association on April 27, 1870, Pherozeshah entered upon a spirited defence of the competitive system, winding up his argument with a long quotation from Macaulay, who at the close of a striking passage in one of his speeches in the House of Commons on the occasion of the passing of the Act of 1853—when the Civil Service was first thrown open to competition—had laid down the general conclusion that those men who distinguished themselves most in academical competition when they were young were the men who in after years distinguished themselves most in the competition of life.

Pherozeshah regarded the competitive system as infinitely superior as a test of qualification to appointment by selection, which he condemned as opening the door to jobbery of the worst character, and as being unjust and demoralising to the Indians whom it was intended to benefit. He could not understand how anyone could fail to perceive the relative value of the two systems, and he felt that there was some silent reason operating on the minds of the framers of the measure. He could not help thinking that they must have been led away by the specious argument that intellectual cultivation did not induce moral cultivation. A striking passage in Pherozeshah's paper, which will bear extensive quotation, deals with the insidious attacks on "literary" education, which have become such a fashion in recent years:

"If we took those periods in the development of a

society when morality did not exist separately, but was still absorbed in religion, it would be perfectly true to say that intellectual culture did not teach morality.

"Thus, during the early ages of Christianity what intellectual training there was would have been utterly insufficient to form the morals of its pupils. In those days nothing could have performed that task so well and so thoroughly as a religious education. History abounds with instances of such periods.

"There was a time when Judaism possessed its sole and best culture in the Mosaic books. There was a time when Hellenism had to look only to the theological poems of such men as Homer and Hesiod; there was a time when Mohamedanism depended for its civilization on the Koran alone.

"The next stage, however, of the progress of these societies, if they succeed in advancing to it, is one in which morality emancipates itself from religious shackles and appears under other shapes and other forms. Such has been the case with English in common with all Western civilization. The Apostles and the Fathers are now superseded by Poets and Historians and Philosophers.

"Not that these people have taken to preaching and inculcating directly and indirectly the moral precepts once contained in the Bible and its Commentaries. The transformation takes place in a less demonstrative manner. The religious teaching slowly distributes itself in the shape of moral axioms and ideas, which in their transition from posterity to posterity, instil themselves into the mind as its first principles. These first principles mould in after life all your thoughts, your actions and your utterances.

"The Poet, the Historian, the Philosopher cannot sing or write but on the condition of remaining true to this

heritage which they receive. And once you have a complete literature so thoroughly and unconsciously imbued with the highest moral teaching of the day, then religion has done its peculiar work, and intellectual education coincides with moral cultivation."

At the close of the lecture several resolutions were passed which condemned the Bill as likely to lead to the perpetration of political jobbery, and not calculated to open the doors of the Civil Service to Indians in the most honourable manner, in the words of Macaulay, "by conquest, as a matter of right, and not as a mere eleemosynary donation".

Despite all this agitation, the Bill became law as it stood. It may be stated here that little was done under the Act till 1879, when rules were framed by which one-sixth of the posts reserved for the Covenanted Service were to be ultimately set apart from Indians; and for gradually carrying out this intention, the number of posts thrown open for competition in England in 1880 was reduced accordingly.

It will be seen at once how inadequately this scheme fulfilled the hopes and aspirations which had been aroused. In 1870, when the Act was passed, there were only nine Indians holding the higher appointments. Within the next 20 years, but sixty more Indians were able to get themselves appointed "Statutory Civilians" under the rules. Such was the measure of fulfilment of the promises held out at the time. Even Lord Lytton had to admit, in a secret report to the authorities in England, that the people of the country had been "cheated" of their hopes.

The Statutory Civilians had a somewhat short and ignoble career. Their recruitment justified in the main the criticism of those who had condemned the system, and an

outcry was raised for its abandonment. A Commission was appointed in 1886, "to devise a scheme which might reasonably be hoped to possess the necessary elements of finality, and to do full justice to the claims of natives of India to higher employment in the public service". But of that hereafter.

Chapter V

MUNICIPAL REFORM AGITATION

1870-1871

THE period with which we are dealing was noteworthy for a great struggle for the establishment of local self-government in Bombay on sound and progressive lines. It may be instructive to recall the various stages through which municipal government in the city had to pass before it achieved its present position.

Before the memorable regime of Mr. Arthur Crawford, when the administration was in the hands of a board of three commissioners, the city was in a most insanitary condition. Various experiments in municipal government had been tried, but none of them had succeeded in ridding Bombay of her filth and dirt and general insanitation.

It was under such conditions that the Act of 1865 came into being. It did away with the absurd system of administration by three commissioners, which had proved so disastrous, and vested the sole executive power in the hands of a single official, responsible to the Bench of Justices. A Controller of Municipal Accounts was appointed to prevent abuse of authority by the Commissioner. The Justices of the Peace of the Town and Island of Bombay were constituted a body corporate with a common seal, for there was no other representative body of men to whom municipal government could be entrusted. The Act came into existence on July 1, 1865.

The new regime was heir to a heavily burdened state. Nevertheless, a vast programme of improvements was undertaken by the Commissioner, Mr. Arthur Crawford,

supported by his energetic assistant, Dr. Hewlett, the Health Officer. The years that followed witnessed strenuous activity in every direction. From being "one foul cesspool and sewers discharging on the sand", the City was made clean and healthy.

So long as things went well, this one-man-rule appeared to be free from objection, though not infrequently, lively encounters took place between the Commissioner and his critics on the Bench of Justices. But the Municipality was soon on the verge of bankruptcy, and all the pent-up forces of discontent which had lain under the surface for several years burst out, and a loud outcry was raised for doing away with the obnoxious Commissioner and the Act which was supposed to be responsible for his autocracy.

Public indignation was roused specially by the manner in which the taxes were collected. In the picturesque language of one of the stalwarts of that period, "the vocabulary of denunciation had been exhausted in characterising the present method of obtaining the Municipal income as one of the most iniquitous things the sun looks down upon, either in torrid or temperate zones".

Various committees were appointed from time to time to consider this state of things, but this method of putting off the evil day, which seems to have been in fashion just as much in those unregenerate days as in our own breathless times, did not prove very satisfactory. At length, an exasperated public decided to take matters into its own hands, and a Ratepayers' Association came into existence in November 1870. It lost no time in sending up a monster petition to the Bench of Justices, detailing the grievances of the public and asking for redress. The Bench pleaded helplessness, and the memorialists were consequently obliged to approach Government directly.

In the meantime, however, the more active spirits on the Bench decided to bring the issue to head, and Mr. James Forbes, one of the leading merchants of the day, placing himself at the head of what may be called the Opposition, gave a notice of motion to have the constitution of the Municipality altered, so as to secure more effective control of the executive, and greater efficiency and economy of administration.

A special meeting of the Justices was called on June 30, 1871, in the Durbar room of the Town Hall to discuss the proposition. It was a memorable meeting in more ways than one. Unparalleled scenes of enthusiasm marked the occasion, and a procession, with bands playing, marched past the Town Hall to stimulate the zeal of the reformers. All Bombay and his wife seemed to be present to watch the great struggle between the reformers and the champions of the Crawford regime.

"The meeting was announced for three o'clock, but long before and long after that hour, Church Gate Street and Elphinstone Circle were crowded with vehicles of every description, all trending their way to the rendezvous at the Town Hall. The large room in which the meeting was held was, as a matter of course, very soon filled to overflowing, but still fresh crowds kept surging up to the doors—only to be informed by the constables that there was not space for one more. The "oldest inhabitant" pronounced solemly that there had never been such a meeting in his recollection..... Round a large table in the centre of the Hall sat their worships on half a dozen rows of chairs, and the rest of the available space was packed with a dense mass of European and Native gentlemen in every variety of costume."[1]

Perhaps no other problem in the civic and political life

[1] *Times of India*, July 6, 1871.

of Bombay has brought together on one platform such a galaxy of talent as was in evidence on that memorable day in June. There were gathered at the meeting men distinguished in every walk of life, keen to serve the interests of the city they loved. Jamshetjee Jejeebhoy, Naoroji Furdunji, Sorabji Bengalee, Vishvanath Mandlik, Budruddin Tyabji, Pherozeshah Mehta, Dosabhoy Framji, Mahadeo Govind Ranade, Narayen Wassudeo—such were among the representatives of the Indian community. The British element was represented by such notable men as Robert Knight, James Maclean, Martin Wood, James Forbes, Hamilton Maxwell, Captain Hancock, Captain Henry, John Connon and Thomas Blaney. These were the makers of the new Bombay, the foundations of which had been laid during the epoch-making administration of Sir Bartle Frere. They were gathered that evening to fight the battle of municipal reform, and to lay broad and deep the foundations of local self-government in the city.

The debate was worthy of the occasion, and lasted through four sittings. An enthusiastic public applauded every telling hit, and spurred its champions to do their best. It is not necessary to enter into a discussion of the proposition moved by Mr. Forbes, and the several amendments thereto, which were proposed by both the apologists and the opponents of the redoubtable Commissioner, who gave and received many hard knocks in the course of the debate.

The main feature of most of these proposals was the abolition of the commissionership, and the substitution in its place of an executive Town Council assisted by a Secretary. Considering the experience and capacity of the leaders in the movement, one cannot help a feeling of astonishment at the utter fatuity of this remedy for municipal mismanagement, for it was a revival in another form of the

joint control, which had proved such a disastrous failure in the case of the Board of Conservancy and its successor, the truimvirate of municipal commissioners, who were in existence prior to 1865.

It was given to one man alone out of that large and representative body to lay his finger with unerring instinct on the weak spot in the municipal administration, and boldly to point out the right remedy. It was Pherozeshah who stood up in his place towards the end of that long and historic debate, and confidently told the Justices how they had all failed to grasp the real point at issue, and had been led away into reviving discredited schemes in a desperate endeavour to get out of their existing difficulties.

The proposals he put forward, and which were ultimately embodied in the Act of 1872, reveal a political sagacity and breadth of outlook, which for a young man of twenty-six may well be considered astonishing, particularly when we remember that he was propounding principles which were but dimly realized even by the ablest among his colleagues. But it was a distinguishing characteristic of Pherozeshah even at that early age that he could see farther than any of his contemporaries, and possessed a shrewdness of judgment which was truly remarkable. His receptive mind had imbibed, besides, in the free atmosphere of England, ideas and principles of government which the writings of political philosophers like Mill had made current coin. He had also studied the working of self-governing institutions in the very home of political and civic freedom.

In Pherozeshah's opinion, it was not the Act of 1865 that was at fault so much as the constitution of the body which was charged with the administration of municipal affairs. "There never will be," he observed, "efficient muni-

cipal administration in Bombay till there is a popular and responsible Bench of Justices elected at regular intervals by the ratepayers themselves, a consultative Town Council elected out of it, with a responsible executive officer at its head, appointed by Government, and a Controller of Accounts appointed by the Bench to control the Commissioner." The speaker was aware that most people scouted the idea as absurd and visionary, and one which in any case would never be entertained by Government. As to the last objection, he ventured to say that the time was past when strong popular opinion on any subject could be successfully resisted by Government for any length of time. And as for the feasibility of the proposal to set up an elective body, he contented himself with a quotation from a notable speech made by Mr. Anstey at a gathering of the East India Association, in which that versatile and erratic genius had pointed out that local self-government in the widest acceptation of the term was as old as the East itself.

Pherozeshah wound up by declaring that only in such a bold and decisive measure as he had outlined, were to be found real salvation and efficiency, and that for that reason, he was unable to agree with any of the palliatives proposed by Mr. Forbes and other members of the Bench. The speech, able and impressive as it was, met with a somewhat cold reception; for people were in no mood then to listen to original suggestions. They were all out to denounce the Commissioner, and the Act which was supposed to be responsible for his financial vagaries.

This memorable debate on municipal reform came to an end on the fourth day amidst scenes of enthusiasm. The net result of the half a dozen resolutions moved during the discussion, and the twenty-six speeches which were delivered, was a representation to Government to appoint a com-

mission of inquiry, and to take the necessary action in the light of the various reports which had been made from time to time, and the resolutions which had been passed at the meeting.

Government, thereupon, appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Sir Theodore Hope to inquire into the financial position of the Municipality. The report of the committee revealed grave irregularities, which led to a recurrence of the agitation. Again, Mr. Forbes took the lead, and addressed a representation to Government, asking them to relieve the municipality of its embarrassments, and to set up a system of administration on sounder and more progressive lines.

It was about this time, when the agitation was at its highest, and was being conducted on both sides with extreme rancour and violence, that Pherozeshah decided to place his views on municipal government once more before the public. He regarded the question as one of general interest, and was anxious it should be discussed by a wider public than that before which he had laid his proposals on the first occasion. A meeting of the Bombay branch of the East India Association was arranged, and on November 29, 1871, Pherozeshah read his paper on the "Municipal Reform Question" at the Framji Cowasji Institute before a large audience. The chair was taken by Mr. Dosabhoy Framji, who, in his opening remarks, observed that he had no doubt it would be a pleasant evening, and that the lessons they might learn would be useful and instructive. How very pleasant the evening was going to be, the Chairman was soon to realize.

The paper was an elaborate and detailed exposition of the views Pherozeshah had already propounded at the Town Hall meeting. After pointing out that Mr. Forbes and his supporters had allowed their zeal to overrun their discre-

tion, with the confidence of youth he preached to his audience a homily on the duty of those who would aspire to lead their fellow-men. Said he:

"The self-constituted leaders of popular movements have a two-fold duty to perform. It is not sufficient for them to stand forth boldly to give loud utterance to the confused and incoherent popular cries. It is not sufficient for them to reiterate and proclaim the popular indiscriminate wailings and inconclusive analyses of the public grievances.

"There is another and a higher duty cast upon them, the duty of guiding and rolling the movement in its proper path, of extricating it from the confusion of words and thoughts under which it usually labours, of analysing the genuine and substantial causes of it, of discussing and proposing measures well adapted to meet the end in view."

After criticizing the attitude of the leaders of the reform movement, Pherozeshah entered upon a vigorous defence of Mr. Crawford, and showed what vast improvements had been effected during his strenuous regime. He pictured to his audience the woeful condition of Bombay as the Commissioner had found her in 1865. It was not a time for patient deliberation, but for prompt and vigorous action, for "there is a crisis in human affairs when ordinary means avail not, when men must consent to strong measures on the sole condition that they are efficient, when they must give up their freedom and lay aside their most cherished institutions, their most valued forms and guarantees of order and economy, and submit to the strong rule and the strong hand, absolute and arbitrary, on the sole condition that it fails not. Such crises are common in the history of the growth of minor institutions as of great states and commonwealths."

The hour had found the man, and Pherozeshah thought it was highly unjust, that the great work done by

Mr. Crawford for the City should be allowed to be altogether obscured by the financial irregularities of which he was undoubtedly guilty. It was also a muddled view of the situation to saddle the Act with the sole responsibility for the unfortunate position of affairs in which the Municipality had found itself placed.

Continuing, Pherozeshah said that the remedy lay in the introduction of the free representative principle in the constitution of the municipal body. A careful study of Indian history showed conclusively that there was no racial or radical incapacity on the part of Indians for enjoying representative institutions. Village communities had existed in India from very ancient times, and within their own sphere they used to exercise wide powers. There was ample testimony to the competence with which they discharged their functions. It was, therefore, absurd to suggest that representative institutions were altogether foreign to the genuis of the people of India. Equally fallacious and contrary to the teachings of History was it to say that they were out of place in a system of government which was paternal in character.

From these and other considerations, it was obvious that a measure of local self-government could safely be established, particularly in Bombay, where her citizens had given ample proof of their capacity and public spirit. Unless such a constitutional reform was brought about, it would be idle to expect any improvement in civic affairs. The changes proposed by Mr. Forbes and others were against all principle and experience, and were a revival in another form of experiments which had failed disastrously in the past.

The views expounded by Pherozeshah in this paper may be read with profit today, not only for their lucid and vigorous exposition of first principles, but also as illustrat-

ing the maturity of thought and political sagacity which characterized the man even at that early age.

The audience, however, was in no mood to appreciate the point of view of the lecturer, or the ability with which he had marshalled his facts and arguments. Blinded by passion and prejudice, it strongly resented his daring attempt to place the administration of Mr. Crawford in a proper perspective. It did not want any defence of the obnoxious Commissioner, and it conveyed its displeasure at the attempt in a forcible manner. Great disorder prevailed during the continuance of the lecture, and uproarious scenes marked its conclusion. As the following account will show, the proceedings were of a very lively character, and terminated amidst scenes of wild confusion:

"Mr. Pherozeshah then ascended the platform and began his paper. His introductory remarks elicited a few 'hear, hears' which stood out in bold relief against one or two vigorous hisses which seemed thrown in by some persons of taste, in order that the value of the slight applause should be increased rather than drowned, and the sounds rendered more sweet by the additional charm of contrast.

"The lecturer however continued though the short, sharp staccatoed hiss which marked every full stop, and which ultimately warned us of where the very commas occurred, was still sent forth with exemplary vigour and enthusiasm. Scarcely, however, had each of these gentle reminders of disapproval been uttered, when it had to do battle with an ocean of other cries of 'shame, shame, insulting', mostly disputing its authority, and amongst which it soon expired.

"At length the paper was finished, when the dissatisfaction which was felt by many members became evident, whilst others, desirous of carrying on matters peaceably, cried 'order, order, chair, chair', but to no purpose. The

steam had been raised to too high a pressure, and it was absolutely necessary to blow off a quantity, and in this operation all sense of order and regulation seemed to be lost sight of.

"Mr. Sorabji Rustomji Bunsha rose and attempted to say a few words. The chairman rose, and he also attempted to say a few words, and it was too evident that others were longing to follow his example.

"The chairman, finding a great obstacle in the way of his addressing the meeting in the person of Mr. Sorabji, who was carrying on matters very enthusiastically in another quarter, requested that gentleman to be seated—an argument the force of which, however, that gentleman seemed unable to see—but as he faced the chairman evidently desiring to be convinced on the subject before he could give place to another, Mr. Dosabhoy took the opportunity of the momentary pause of proposing an adjournment.

"Adjournment, adjournment', responded those on the chairman's left. 'Hear him, hear him', answered those on the right. Again the chairman attempted to make himself heard, but as by this time Mr. Sorabji was well launched, and in full swing, the expressions of indignation which escaped him were rendered no more intelligible.

"Each moment the confusion increased, till the whole meeting rose, as if by one accord, and each person began to raise his voice in defence of the party he considered in the right. Even in this, one might have heard the opinions of those who were pressing close to him, had it not been for the vigorous expedient which occurred to some, of laying into the tables with their walking canes, right merrily. This, however, was eventually stopped by the gas being turned out just as the second chairman (Mr. Dosabhoy having stated that the meeting was adjourned and left) was about to take his seat. This had the effect of causing parties

to see that they were really all in the dark, which it would have required many hours' talking to do."[2]

Thus ended the "pleasant" evening of which the hopeful chairman had spoken in his introductory remarks. But the storm provoked by the fearless expression of such unconventional and unpopular opinions as abounded in the lecture did not easily subside. *The Times of India,* one of the most trenchant critics of the Crawford regime, while regretting that the disorder which prevailed at the meeting prevented the exposure of the "thundering mistake" that all improvements effected in Bombay since 1865 were due to the late Commissioner, went on to say that the paper read by Pherozeshah was, excepting for a few paragraphs, 'a peculiarly perverse, erroneous and sophistical production'.

The article ended by expressing surprise and regret that the lecture should have been allowed by the committee of the Association to be read at the general meeting.

That this was also the general feeling of the members of that body was made clear by subsequent proceedings. A requisition signed by about thirty members was sent to the chairman, asking him to call a special general meeting to consider the desirability of expunging the paper read by Pherozeshah from the records of the Association.

A meeting was accordingly convened on the 18th December in the Framji Cowasji Institute. Dr. Bhau Daji was in the chair, and there was a large audience. Pherozeshah was present but walked out with one or two of his friends, shortly after the commencement of the proceedings, followed by a "tempest of hisses, varied by shouts of 'Order, Order' and vigorous hurrahs".

The proposition for expunging the lecture from the

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[2] *The Bombay Gazette*, Dec. 1, 1871.

record was carried by a large majority, and the chairman wound up the proceedings by declaring that the paper was to be considered "as not read and as not worth discussion" and by apologizing for the incident, and assuring the public that there would be no recurrence of it in the future.

It was one of the most characteristic incidents in the career of Pherozeshah. It was at once a measure of his strength of character and political acumen. Few men would have ventured at his age to put forward views so utterly unpopular, and so greatly in advance of his times. But he possessed courage in a remarkable degree, and once his mind was made up on any question, he expressed himself with uncompromising independence, undeterred either by popular opinion or official displeasure.

That his advocacy of Mr. Crawford was a little too vehement, however, must be admitted. He had been away for practically the whole of the period during which Bombay was "Haussmannized", and he was greatly struck by the transformation which he witnessed on his return. This accounted for his zealous partisanship of the masterful Commissioner, whose autocracy and extravagance had roused such intense feeling against him, and had so largely obscured the magnificent work he had done for the City. He was far ahead of the times in his ideas, and could rank amongst the greatest of town-planners.

The subsequent history of the municipal reform question may be briefly dealt with. In response to repeated and earnest representations, the Government went to the assistance of the Municipality, and a loan of Rs. 15 lacs was sanctioned by the Government of India on conditions which were most humiliating to the City. Thereafter, the work

of reforming the municipal constitution was taken in hand, and a Bill was introduced in the Legislative Council on March 27, 1872, by the Hon'ble Mr. Tucker. Its provisions were of a most illiberal character, particularly those relating to the constitution of the Corporation. The latter was to consist of 80 members, out of whom 32 were to be elected by the Justices from among themselves, and 32 were to be nominated by Government from the same body. The remaining 16 seats were to go to ratepayers, half by election and half by nomination. There was to be a Municipal Commissioner as sole executive authority, and a Town Council in charge of the finances.

It is not surprising that these proposals with regard to the constitution were almost universally condemned. The Advocate-General, Mr. White, described the Bill as comprising the minimum of representation with the maximum of Government control, and as giving "a homoeopathic dose of the popular elective principle and an overwhelming dose of Government supervision".

The Times of India characterised the introduction of the ratepayers' element as "the sprat thrown to the whale".

As a result of these and other criticisms, and representations from various quarters, the Bill underwent drastic changes, and ultimately emerged as a more or less liberal measure. The number of members was reduced to 64, half of whom were to be elected by ratepayers, and a fourth by the Justices; the remainder were to be nominated by Government. A Standing Committee was created to keep an eye on the finances. The Government reserved to themselves the right of nominating the Commissioner, but the Health Officer was to be selected by the Corporation. It was a triumph of popular agitation, which, ill-directed at times,

nevertheless achieved ultimately a fair measure of local self-government, which in essence has survived to the present day.

It will be noticed how closely the Act of 1872 approximated to ideals of municipal government so confidently expounded by Pherozeshah amidst obloquy and ridicule. Others, notably the redoubtable Mr. Maclean, have claimed credit for this measure, just as there were not wanting people who arrogated to themselves many of the achievements of Mr. Crawford; but a just verdict must accord to Pherozeshah the merit of being the first among his contemporaries to diagnose the evils of the times, and to prescribe the right remedies.

While others were preaching discredited formulas, he ooldly stood up to outline a constitution, little understood at the time, but which was ultimately adopted, almost in its entirety, and which, amended in 1888, has, in its broad features, endured for well-nigh eighty years, and has given Bombay the best municipal government in the country.

Chapter VI

THE ADMINISTRATION OF LORD LYTTON

1877—1880

THERE was little of active political life during the period which immediately preceded the administration of Lord Lytton. The spirit of reaction which animated the policy of that Viceroy roused to activity forces which were so long slumbering. A series of unpopular measures, resulting in widespread discontent, gave strength to the feeble currents of nationalism, and created a public opinion which gained in vigour and volume as injustice was heaped upon injustice. It was the beginning of a political consciousness which found organized expression a few years later under the impact of an event which convulsed all India.

One of the earliest and most discreditable measures of Lord Yytton's viceroyalty was the Vernacular Press Act, which aroused a controversy and occasioned an outburst of feeling, such as had not been witnessed before.

It was a Draconian piece of legislation, based for the most part on the Irish Coercion Act of 1870, and in some respects more stringent than the latter, which was a special measure brought into existence to deal with a special emergency.

It armed the Government with powers to demand security from newspaper proprietors not to publish articles likely to excite disaffection, to forfeit such deposits and to seize the plant, etc., of the paper after warning. There was also a clause providing that a newspaper could take itself out of the operation of the Act by submitting to a regular

censorship. To quote Sir Erskine Perry, "no imperial legislator could forge a more powerful weapon for extirpating an obnoxious Press".

Perhaps the worst feature of the Act was that it exempted from its operation all English newspapers, though in many cases they were the greater sinners. As Mr. (afterwards Sir) Arthur Hobhouse, one of the most distinguished lawyers of the time, observed, it was Englishmen who said the worst things of Government, and said them most continually; and he condemned the distinction as "class legislation of the most striking and invidious description, at variance with the whole tenor of our policy, and only to be justified by the most cogent proofs of danger from the maltreated class".

Among the criticisms, which stand out from the mass of literature that has gathered round the subject, is a letter written by Pherozeshah to *The Times of India*, less than a week after the Act was passed. It was a skilful and powerful assault on the Government position with regard to the measure. The writer asserted that the Vernacular Press had been guilty of no disloyal hostility to British rule. The worst that could be said of it was that on occasions it was guilty of angry recriminations, exaggerated generalizations and vulgar personalities. But such effusions conveyed no treasonable ideas to a native reading them with his natural knowledge of native modes of thought and expression.

Dealing with the dangers inherent in the vesting of such wide powers in the hands of the servants of the Crown, Pherozeshah observed that it was at all times difficult to draw the line between severe, though just, criticism of Government and its measures, and the licentious abuse of them, bordering on the preaching of sedition and the propagation of disaffection. If the judges of the distinction were

to be the very men who were the objects of the criticism, they would be more than human if in course of time and by gradual stages all hostile criticism was not brought within the pale of the proscription. If the Vernacular Press was licentious and scurrilous, Pherozeshah went on to say, the system of licensing would but aggravate and intensify its mischievous tendency, and annihilate nothing but honest and useful criticism, particularly in the case of a Press in its infancy.

"Moderate and respectable men, their functions not yet hardened into habits, would retire from the field with hardly a struggle. Violent and unprincipled agitators would thrive on the persecution which would furnish the very nourishment necessary for their existence. And while thus the sound and healthy political growth of the people would be indefinitely retarded, the Government would be deprived of all trustworthy sources of keeping itself well informed of the real inner feelings and thoughts of the people towards it. Deprived of free and sincere criticism, it would hardly know to steer its way through servile adulation or scurrilous abuse."

The year after the Vernacular Press Act was passed saw the enactment of another unpopular measure, and on this occasion the "poet viceroy" found himself in opposition not only to the general public but to even his own council, with the exception of the Finance Member.

In the early part of 1879, the import duties on cotton goods were abolished, and a large revenue was sacrificed in the sacred name of Free Trade. It aroused bitter opposition in India, all the more bitter, because of the feeling which was general that the interests of India had been sacrificed without compunction in obedience to the clamour of the wealthy and powerful Lancashire interests. And all the

while, the champions of the measure talked of justice and equity, and invoked the principles of Free Trade to their assistance.

The Indian public rated these hypocritical professions at their proper value, and indignant protests were heard in all parts of the country. A large and influential meeting was held in Bombay on May 3, 1879, in the Framji Cowasji Institute—the use of the Town Hall having been refused—at which a petition to be submitted to the House of Commons was adopted.

The petition was read at the meeting by Pherozeshah. It appears very probable it was drafted by him though there is no positive proof of that fact. The document was ably drawn up. It pointed out that the duty existed for purposes of revenue, that the objection of its being of a protective character had been removed when the duty on coarser goods was abolished the year previous, and that a further remission at a time of debt, deficit, war and famine was utterly indefensible.

Needless to state, the House of Commons turned a deaf ear, for it had only a month previous accorded its approval to Lord Lytton's action as the furtherance of a policy to which Her Majesty's Government had been pledged. Thus did British statesmen discharge their "sacred trust," and thus were £200,000 of India's revenue shamelessly bartered away "to win over the Lancashire votes for party purposes at home."

After his memorable fight over the Crawford administration, Pherozeshah took little part in municipal affairs. His practice took him very often to the mofussil, where his acute intellect, ready wit and powers of cross-examination made him particularly sought after in criminal cases. He figured, therefore, but seldom in the debates which took

place in the early years of the reformed Corporation. When he spoke, however, he did so with characteristic vigour and independence.

One such occasion arose at the time of the election of Mr. Dosabhoy Framji to the chair of the Corporation. In view of the approaching visit of the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) the office was invested with special importance. After the candidate had been duly proposed, Mr. Maclean rose and indulged in an outburst of racial prejudice and arrogance typical of him. He thought the time had not come when any Indian could preside with advantage over such an assembly as the Corporation. An Indian could not perform the duties of chairman with the vigour and impartiality that would be displayed by a European. Besides, as Bombay owed its prosperity in a great measure to the English mercantile community, the honour of welcoming the Prince of Wales to an essentially English city should be conferred upon one who belonged to that race.

This outburst distinctly enlivened the proceedings, and evoked vigorous protests from all sides. The reply which Pherozeshah gave was dignified and to the point. He hoped the Corporation would never depart from the policy of looking straight at what was just and proper and best for the interests of that body, discarding all distinction of colour or creed. As members of the Corporation, they were bound to see only to merit and qualifications in making their appointments, and when they found them combined in European gentlemen, they were only too anxious and ready to recognize them; and the speaker doubted not that when they were found centred in Indians, Englishmen would never fall behind in recognizing them freely, generously and ungrudgingly.

Chapter VII

THE ILBERT BILL

1883

WITH the advent of Lord Ripon, a vast change came over the spirit of the administration. The misguided and reactionary policy of Lord Lytton had quickened the political consciousness of the people. The task to which his successor set his hands was to guide the movement along healthy channels, and to recognize the potent forces that were at work, rousing India from her age-long slumber, and giving strength and reality to the vague yearnings for freedom which were troubling her soul.

From the Press and the platform the new spirit was vigorously being fostered, and on every hand were visible the signs of a general awakening. The forces which were at work, however, were scattered, lacked cohesion and strength, and required a powerful stimulus to weld them together. It came from a strange quarter and in an unsuspected manner, and the Ilbert Bill became the innocent instrument of an explosion which shook the country from one end to the other.

The history of that memorable measure, which aimed, in a not important particular, at removing an anomaly, is interesting. The criminal law of the land, as it stood in 1882, was that no magistrate—unless he happened to be a Presidency Magistrate—who was not a European British subject, could inquire into or try any charge against a European British subject. The result was that no Indian judge or magistrate, however high his position, had any

right to try even "the humblest European loafer in the mofussil," while his English subordinate enjoyed full jurisdiction.

When the Criminal Procedure Code was being revised in 1882, Mr. Behari Lal Gupta of the Bengal Civil Service had written to Sir Ashley Eden, the then head of the administration, pointing out the absurdity of the law. As officiating Presidency Magistrate in Calcutta, he had enjoyed full powers over European British subjects. But when he was promoted to a more responsible position in the interior, he found himself unable to deal with the most trivial cases affecting Europeans.

Sir Ashley Eden forwarded the letter to the Government of India, supporting Mr. Gupta's suggestions, but it was too late to incorporate them in the Bill of 1882, which had already passed through the first stage. The Government of India, however, invited the opinions of the Local Governments, and there being an overwhelming consensus of opinion among them in favour of the change, a separate Bill was introduced by Mr. (afterwards Sir) Courtney Ilbert in 1883, embodying the changes suggested.

It proposed to invest Indian District Magistrates and Sessions Judges with the right to try European British subjects, and empowered Local Governments in their discretion to extend the powers to other officials belonging to certain specified classes.

The Bill was at once the signal for a tremendous outburst of feeling in the 'Anglo-Indian' community, from whom all over the country, Lord Ripon's Government was flooded with indignant protests. Meetings were held throughout India, at which violent speeches were made, in which both the Government and the people were abused in a manner that was perfectly outrageous.

The meeting in the Town Hall at Calcutta particularly distinguished itself by the violence of its criticisms of the Bill. It hissed, groaned and yelled at every mention of the Viceroy and Mr. Ilbert. One of the principal speakers, Mr. Branson, a well-known lawyer, who achieved an unenviable notoriety in the controversy over the measure, so conducted himself on the occasion, as to call for a rebuke from a correspondent who signed himself "an Englishman" and who had the courage to enter a public protest against such utterances, whereupon the speaker felt constrained to offer a general apology to those whom he had so recklessly abused.

There were other demonstrations, besides this notorious meeting, of the anger with which the English population received Lord Ripon's attempt to establish equality before the law of all classes of His Majesty's subjects. The Viceroy was insulted and hooted at various public gatherings, and his state arrival in Calcutta was made the occasion of a demonstration on the part of the English and the Eurasian community, which was positively disgraceful.

How completely the British community had lost its head may be further evidenced by the story—which was widely believed at the time—of a conspiracy formed by a number of hotheads in Calcutta "who bound themselves, in the event of Government adhering to the proposed legislation, to overpower the sentries at Government House, put the Viceroy on board a steamer at Chandpal Ghat, and deport him to England round the Cape".

This extraordinary plot may well appear incredible, but according to Sir Henry Cotton, the facts were understood to have been within the knowledge of the Lieutenant-Governor and the Commissioner of Police. In another quarter, the planters were reported to have sworn that they

would not accept the Bill if it became law, but "would deal in their own way with the first native magistrate who presumed to try a European."

Such were some of the manifestations of anger and opposition against the Bill. Alone among the important centres of thought and activity, Bombay kept her head and established for herself a reputation for sobriety of thought and feeling, which have through the years been the distinguishing characteristics of public life in the city. Englishmen as well as Indians urged their respective points of view with refreshing vigour, but with an absence of bitterness and violence, which was in pleasant contrast to the ebullition of feeling in other parts of the country.

The same moderation and regard for the decencies of public life characterized the great meeting of the citizens of Bombay held in the Town Hall on April 28, 1883, under the chairmanship of Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy.

The principal resolution was moved by Budruddin Tyabji in an able and eloquent speech. It declared that in the opinion of the meeting the Bill was necessary for the just and impartial administration of justice, and was in consonance with the righteous policy which the British Government had followed in the administration of this country.

The proposition was seconded by Pherozeshah, who, on rising to speak, was greeted with loud and prolonged cheering. In his speech he confined himself mainly to a discussion of the general aspect of the question.

In his opinion, the attitude of the Europeans on this question almost seemed to justify the striking language in which Mr. Bright once defined the position taken up by certain 'Anglo-Indians', which was that "having won India by breaking all the Ten Commandments, it was too late

now to think of maintaining it on principles of the sermon on the mount."

The policy of governing India on principles of justice and equality for all the Queen's subjects of whatever caste and creed had never been so openly and so furiously called in question. It was, therefore, necessary to examine carefully the foundations upon which British power in India rested, and upon which its stability primarily depended.

The conclusion, Pherozeshah went on to argue, which would force itself upon all thinking minds would be that India had never been and would never be held by sword, and that the policy of righteousness adopted by the wisest amongst English statesmen was not only a policy of justice, but also of enlightened self-interest.

"When in the inscrutable dispensation of Providence, India was assigned to the care of England, one can almost imagine that the choice was offered to her as to Israel of old: 'Behold, I have set before you this day a blessing and curse: a blessing if ye will obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I have commanded this day; a curse if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside out of the way which I have commanded this day to go after other Gods which ye have not known."

Amidst the overwhelming mass of speech and writing which the Bill evoked, Pherozeshah's weighty exposition of the principles underlying it, and spirited criticism of the opponents of the measure, arrested widespread attention, and the speaker emerged as a force to be reckoned with in the political development of the country.

The proceedings came to an end with the adoption of an elaborate and closely-reasoned memorial which made out a very strong case for the Bill. It was a remarkable meeting in every way, and it had a great effect on moderate

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opinion throughout the country. *The Times of India* in speaking of it remarked:

"The meeting was sufficiently numerous to be considered a representative one, and at least two or three of the speakers displayed a knowledge of the English language, in its more subtle aspects, which is gratifying to those of us who believe that there is a great intellectual future before the leading Indian races.

"Indeed, three of the orators on the occasion, Messrs. Telang, Budruddin and Mehta, showed themselves to possess as great a mastery of our somewhat difficult idioms as Cicero ever did of the Greek, an accomplishment on which the famous Roman orator rather prided himself."

We must now turn away from this sordid story of the passions and animosities roused by an ill-starred measure which a noble-minded Viceroy sought to introduce in his anxiety to redeem in some manner the oft-repeated pledges of his sovereign. How his efforts were in a large measure frustrated may be briefly told.

After the first introduction of the Bill, the opinions of Local Governments and officials were invited. It was found that they were greatly divided, and the Government of India decided to make a concession to the strength of racial prejudice and the clamour of a noisy agitation by dropping from the Bill all provisions conferring jurisdiction on Magistrates other than District Magistrates and Sessions Judges.

The scope of the proposed enactment was thus greatly curtailed, and as it stood now, it affected in practice the jurisdiction of only half a dozen Indians.

The amended proposals were approved by the Secretary of State in Council, and announced by the Viceroy at a meeting of the Legislative Council on December 7, 1883.

GANDHI SMARAKA GRANTHALAYA
BANGALORE-1.

English opinion, however, was not satisfied by the concessions made, and threats of an explosion of race feeling were held out as freely as before. It appeared as if the opponents of the measure would be satisfied with nothing less than its absolute abandonment. This the Government was not prepared to agree to, and the agitation continued in its violence. At this stage, the Honourable Mr. Evans of Calcutta, on behalf of the Opposition, made certain proposals for a compromise, which, though they were not accepted, opened the way for negotiations, which ultimately led to a settlement, or Concordat, as it was dubbed.

This was in effect the adoption of a recommendation made by the Government of Bombay some months before, that European British subjects, when tried before District Magistrates and Sessions Judges, should have the right of being tried by a jury composed of a majority of their own countrymen.

Thus was recognition at length accorded to the contention that an Englishman had a right to be tried by his peers, a theory in support of which the Magna Carta and various other solemn documents had been freely trotted out by the critics of the Bill.

The Concordat was received by the Indian community with considerable disappointment. Preparations had been going on for some time for strengthening the hands of the Viceroy by public meetings and memorials, as it was felt that some of his colleagues were inclined to surrender the principle of the Bill. But before anything could be done, the settlement was announced.

The Anglo-Indian press hailed it as a triumph; the Indian public regarded it generally as in the nature of a capitulation. A section of Bengali opinion showed itself particularly hostile to the compromise, and things looked

ugly. The statesmanlike attitude adopted by most of the Indian leaders at this critical juncture ultimately saved the situation. The Bill in its amended form was passed on January 25, 1884, after a stormy career of close upon a year.

Chapter VIII

CIVIC HONOURS

1882—1885

LORD RIPON'S viceroyalty was rendered memorable by other measures of a less controversial but more momentous character than the Ilbert Bill. Among these, the scheme of Local Self-Government which he inaugurated may be regarded as the greatest monument to his sympathy and statesmanship. It was announced by the Government in May 1882, in a resolution which speaks eloquently of the political sagacity and high purpose which characterized Lord Ripon's outlook on Indian affairs.

Intense enthusiasm was aroused throughout the country by the bold announcement of policy, and its translation into practice was eagerly looked for. The Bombay Corporation, like other municipalities, woke up to the necessity of having a more liberal constitution, and an animated discussion took place on the subject in the civic chamber in January 1883.

Various suggestions were made by the Indian members for investing the Corporation with greater power and responsibility, and for reducing the excessive representation enjoyed by the Government and the Justices. On the other hand, the official section and its supporters were solidly against any sweeping changes in the constitution. Their contentions were answered by Pherozeshah in a speech in which he briefly reviewed the position, and skilfully made out a case for the reduction of official control. He laughed out the fear that an enlargement of the ratepayers' repre-

sentation would give the numerically largest community a preponderance of seats in the Corporation, and he expressed his firm faith in the efficacy of a system of free electorates. Referring to the vast improvements effected in municipal administration in the recent past, he declared that "it was the magic of the elective principle that had effected such a marvellous change."

The discussion resulted in the appointment of a small committee, which included Pherozeshah, for suggesting amendments in the Act. The results of their labours and of those of other committees appointed from time to time will be noticed when we come to consider Pherozeshah's share in moulding the Municipal Act of 1888, under which the affairs of the city are administered even at the present day.

* * *

Later, as Chairman of the Corporation—a honour, which, as will be presently seen, had come to him at a comparatively early age in recognition of his services—it was his privilege to ask Lord Ripon to lay the foundation-stone of the handsome pile of buildings in which are housed the present municipal offices. In inviting him to perform the ceremony Pherozeshah observed:

"My Lord, we do not ask you to perform the ceremony for the purpose of securing the eclat of an imposing ceremonial. We ask you, because in this city, which claims with pardonable pride to be the favoured abode of free municipal institutions, we hail you as the apostle, who, with keen and marvellous appreciation, has done more than any other to extend and develop the true principles of local self-government."[1]

Lord Ripon's reply was a graceful tribute to the

[1] 19 December 1884

energy and public spirit which had made the Bombay Municipality a model for all India. His Lordship concluded with the hope that on the foundation-stone laid that day would be raised not merely an imposing building, "but a noble superstructure of good work done, of education extended, of sanitation advanced, of communications improved, of sickness alleviated, which will form a monument more enduring than marble for those who have laboured together for the public good."

* * *

It was in the fitness of things that the foundation-stone of the new municipal offices, to which reference has been made, should have been laid during the chairmanship of a man who had contributed more than any other to the reputation for efficiency and public spirit of the civic body they were to house. The Corporation put him in the chair at a comparatively early age in recognition of the notable part he had played in civic affairs. The honour owed nothing to canvassing or wire-pulling; it was a spontaneous tribute to the ability and public spirit of which Pherozeshah had given such ample proofs.

After a year of office, during which Pherozeshah won the admiration of everybody by the manner in which he discharged his onerous duties, he was re-elected chairman for another year.

For Pherozeshah, these were years of a busy and lucrative practice, which was greatly affected by the demands which the presidential chair always makes on the time and energy of the member who occupies it. In a country where there is no such thing as a leisured class such work often entails a considerable sacrifice.

Pherozeshah cheerfully paid the price. It is true he was not exactly a man to "scorn delights and live laborious

days." He was fond of the good things of life, and his tastes and habits were inclined towards luxuriousness. He had built for himself a pretentious house at Nepean Sea Road, used to drive about in a carriage and pair, and affected expensive clothes. As soon as he had earned enough, however, to satisfy his extravagant tastes, the service of the public claimed him. Very often he was known to forgo a handsome fee, merely in order that he might be able to attend some meeting of the Corporation. Had he so chosen, he might have amassed a fortune. As it was, he left behind him a modest competence, and a record of service and achievement which few among his countrymen have ever equalled.

* * *

We have seen how the Ilbert Bill agitation and the enlightened policy of Lord Ripon roused into vigorous activity forces which had been driven underground—thanks chiefly to Lord Lytton's Gagging Act—and which had lain more or less dormant all these years. All over the country, the educated classes perceived the necessity and advantages of organized agitation for the redress of political grievances, and the significance of recent events was not lost on them.

As one of the first fruits of this general awakening, the Bombay Presidency Association was established in the city in January 1885. The old Bombay Association, of which Mr. Naoroji Furdunji had been the life and soul, had practically gone out of existence, and the Bombay branch of the East India Association, having no independent existence, was unable adequately to voice the popular sentiment and to defend the rights of the people. Attempts had been made to revive these organizations, but they had proved unsuccessful.

The new Association was inaugurated at a public meeting held on January 31, 1885, at the Framji Cowasji Institute, in response to an invitation issued by the triumvirate which was at this period at the head of all public movements, Tyabji, Telang and Pherozeshah. The last two were appointed honorary secretaries along with Dinshaw Wacha. There were the usual speeches, and the usual orators, and the new Association was started amidst considerable public enthusiasm.

The Association, which thus came into being, showed considerable activity in the early years of its existence. By resolutions, memorials and public meetings, it focussed the general feeling of the community on all matters of common interest. Nothing seemed too trivial for its notice if it involved a question of principle.

One of the earliest acts of the Association was to organize the carrying on of energetic propaganda work in England. The moment was propitious, for a general election was imminent, Mr. Gladstone having decided to appeal to the country against the House of Commons which had rejected his Home Rule proposals. In view of the growing interest which Parliament was beginning to evince in Indian affairs, and the growth of what might be called an Indian party, it was felt that there was a unique opportunity of educating the English electorate as to the wants of India, and of persuading it to support candidates who had made her cause their own.

To concert measures for carrying out the objects in view, a meeting of the members of the Bombay Presidency Association was held in September 1885, at which various speakers pointed out with force the necessity of educating English public opinion. One of them quoted from an article in the *Daily News* in which the writer had observed:

"It is of particular importance that Indian opinion should be ascertained and studied in this country at the present time. For there is a set of pretentious busybodies, who on the strength of having read a little Indian history, and imbibed a good deal of the worst sort of Anglo-Indian prejudice, are posing as the sole authorities on Indian subjects."

Among the resolutions adopted was one approving of the distribution and publication of a general address to the electors of the United Kingdom on behalf of India. Another proposition, moved by Dadabhai Naoroji, declared that the following candidates on account of their services and publicly expressed opinions were deserving of the support of the Indian people: The Marquis of Hartington, Sir J. Phear, Captain Verney, and Messrs. John Bright, J. Stagg, Lal Mohan Ghosh, William Digby, W. S. Blunt, S. Keay, S. Laing and W. C. Plowden. The resolution further repudiated the claims of Sir Richard Temple, Mr. J. M. Maclean, Sir Lewis Pelly, Mr. A. S. Ayrton and Sir Roper Lethbridge to speak on behalf of the people of India.

Dadabhai Naoroji was followed by Pherozeshah, who made some noteworthy observations. Differing from Mr. Tyabji, who thought they could appeal successfully to both the great parties in England, and going a little beyond Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozeshah was strongly in favour of Indian questions being made party questions. He urged that the time had come when they must submit Indian problems to the keen and searching criticism of party warfare.

The results of these determined efforts of Indian political associations to gain the ear of the British public were distinctly interesting and suggestive. So far as the elec-

tions went, the hopes of this country were rudely shattered. The electors generally went to the polls without troubling their heads about India and her champions, with the result that those whose candidature had been recommended by Indian leaders failed to get in while those whose views on Indian problems had been condemned found themselves successful.

From the point of view, however, of interesting the stolid Briton in the affairs of this country, the mission achieved some measure of success. It distributed a large number of pamphlets on the questions of the day, and secured a hearing from some thousands of people in England, who promised a sympathetic consideration of Indian problems in the future.

As Pherozeshah observed, if the delegates had not set the Thames on fire they had certainly kindled a spark in the hearts of the British public which would blaze up into a flame in time to come if Indian leaders persisted in their efforts and continued to send such missions year after year.

Chapter IX

THE BIRTH OF THE CONGRESS

1885

THE activities of Indian reformers at this period found their most practical expression in the establishment of an organization which for more than thirty years has laboured, with a success which its promoters could hardly have dreamt of, to rouse the political consciousness of the people and to direct and foster the national movement. The Indian National Congress came into being towards the close of 1885, timidly and unobtrusively, but under circumstances which were full of promise for the future.

It was in the time of Lord Lytton that the conviction had begun to gather ground that some action was needed to counteract the growing forces of reaction, which were threatening the peaceful progress and development of the country. The time had arrived for the organization of a popular movement which would arrest the reactionary tendencies increasingly manifested in the policy of Government. It was in 1883 that the first step was taken by Mr. Allan Octavian Hume—whose distinguished career in the Civil Service had just come to an end—in a circular letter, dated March 1, 1883, addressed to the graduates of the Calcutta University. It was a stirring appeal to the young men of Bengal to band themselves into a body of earnest workers for the national cause. If only fifty people came forward in the first instance, an organization could be started, which would develop into a national movement in course of time.

It may be mentioned in passing, that the lines suggested by Mr. Hume were more or less adopted by Gokhale nearly three decades later in his Servants of India Society.

The appeal was coupled with a stern warning of the consequences of a lukewarm patriotism: "If you, the picked men, the most highly educated of the nation, cannot, scorning personal ease and selfish objects, make a resolute struggle to secure greater freedom for yourselves and your country, a more impartial administration, a larger share in the administration of your own affairs, then we, your friends, are wrong and your adversaries right; then are Lord Ripon's noble aspirations for your good fruitless and visionary; then, at present at any rate, all hopes of progress are at an end, and India truly neither lacks nor deserves any better government than she enjoys."

The result of this stirring manifesto was the formation of the Indian National Union towards the end of 1884, which, in consultation with the Bombay Presidency Association, the Sarvajanik Sabha and other political organizations, arranged to hold an All-India Conference in December 1885, for the purpose of deciding upon a plan of political campaign, and effecting closer co-operation between the leaders of thought in various parts of the country. It was hoped that the Conference would form the germ of an Indian Parliament, which, properly constituted and conducted, would be an effective reply to the assertion that India was unfit for any form of representative institutions.

The trustees of the Goculdas Tejpal Boarding School at Gowalia Tank, of whom Telang was one, placed the spacious building at the disposal of the organizers of the Conference. By the 27th of December, everything was ready for the reception of the 'representatives', as they were called. The whole of the day, and part of the night too was spent

in mutual introductions and informal discussions. In the evening, a large number of prominent citizens came to welcome the representatives, and to express appreciation of the task to which they had set their hands.

On the fateful morning of December 28, 1885, seventy-two good men and true, representing a cross-section of the most advanced political opinion, sat down to chalk out a programme of action. It was a happy circumstance that Bombay became the meeting place of the first Congress. It was in Bombay that the foundations of Local Self-Government had been laid, and it was appropriate that Bombay should also be the birthplace of the national movement. The honour of presiding on the occasion went to Mr. W. C. Bonnerji, one of the most eminent leaders Bengal has produced.

The gathering was small, being confined to the delegates, and a few visitors, among whom were Sir William Wedderburn, Mr. Justice Jardine, Professor Wordsworth, Colonel Phelps, Mr., afterwards Sir, Ramkrishna Bhandarkar and Mr. Ranade, then a Judge of the Small Causes Court at Poona. But it was a representative gathering, which included leaders of thought in all parts of the country. In the words of the President, "never had so important and comprehensive an assemblage occurred within historical times on the soil of India." Some there were, advanced in years, like the grand Old Man of India; others like Bonnerji, Telang, Subramania Iyer, Wacha and Pherozeshah, still young and enthusiastic, and full of hopes for the future. All alike were greatly in earnest and fired with a noble purpose.

Year after year, these early stalwarts stood on the Congress platform, unmindful of ridicule and obloquy, and with their faith unimpaired in the justice of their cause,

and in its ultimate triumph. Their faith was large in Time, and many of them lived to see the dawn of a brighter day.

The proceedings commenced with the election of the President, moved by Mr. Hume and seconded and supported by Messrs. Subramania Iyer and Telang. Mr. Bonnerji, in acknowledging the honour done to him, made a short speech—the portentous orations of later days were then unknown—in which he explained the objects of the movement.

Referring to the authority of those who had gathered there to speak on behalf of their countrymen, he said he did not claim that they were representatives of the people in the same sense in which members of the House of Commons were representatives of the constituencies, "but if community of sentiments, community of feelings and community of wants enabled anyone to speak on behalf of others, then assuredly they might justly claim to be the representatives of the people of India."

Nine resolutions were moved which, among other things, demanded a Royal Commission of inquiry into the working of the Indian administration, the abolition of the India Council, the expansion of the Legislative Councils, the curtailment of military expenditure and the institution of simultaneous examinations for the Civil Service.

Pherozeshah's share in the proceedings of this historic Congress was not inconsiderable. He was entrusted with the seconding of the first proposition, moved by Mr. G. Subramania Iyer, which approved of the promised committee of inquiry into the working of the Indian administration. Speaking on the resolution, Pherozeshah contended that the committee should be so constituted that it could be in a position to pursue its investigations in this country itself, taking evidence here, and that Indians should be re-

presented on it. He was of opinion that if the inquiry was not granted in the manner pointed out, it would be almost better to have no inquiry at all.

Parliamentary Committees and Royal Commissions were not to be had at short intervals, and it would be disastrous to have a body, composed mainly of Englishmen, sitting in judgment upon themselves. The conclusions at which such a body would arrive would be superficially plausible, but essentially unsound. They would be accepted as guiding principles for at least another twenty years, and the mischief thus ensuing would be incalculable.

The Congress has survived all the onslaughts on it since its modest beginnings in 1885. It has aroused the political consciousness of the people to a degree that could never have been anticipated by the 'founding fathers' of the movement.

Chapter X

THE MUNICIPAL ACT OF 1888

1887-1888

IN the intervening years, various schemes of municipal reform had been discussed and rejected, including a draft Bill providing for a system of executive committees, which was referred to the Corporation for criticism and which that body condemned as a reversion to an unsound principle. Following that, Government introduced the long-looked for Bill in the Legislative Council on July 16, 1887. It was the result of the joint labours of Mr. Naylor, the Legal Remembrancer, and Mr. (afterwards Sir) Charles Ollivant, the Municipal Commissioner, who, during his temporary absence in England in 1883, had been deputed by the Corporation to study the systems of municipal government in existence in Great Britain.

In the Council, the only Indian of outstanding merit, before the Bill was introduced, was Mr. Telang, and to strengthen the popular element on that body, and to secure the requisite knowledge and experience of civic affairs, the Government of Lord Reay had the wisdom to appoint Pherozeshah as an "additional" member. The appointment was received on all sides with cordial approval.

The Bill in the shape in which it was introduced was in many respects of a retrograde character. It sought to enlarge the authority of the Commissioner at the expense of the Corporation, and it reserved to Government powers of initiative and interference in various matters, which ought rightly to fall within the province of a local body.

The Bill was referred to a Select Committee, consisting of Sir Maxwell Melville, a member of the Executive Council and once a distinguished Judge of the High Court, the Advocate-General, Mr. Macpherson, and Messrs. Telang, Pherozeshah and Kazi Shahabuddin.

By the exercise of much tact, patience and ability, Pherozeshah persuaded the Committee to make changes in the Bill. Perhaps the most important particular in which the measure was improved was that whereby the municipal government of the city was vested in the Corporation, subject to express provisions in the Act. The original clause had set up the Commissioner as the authority charged with carrying out the provisions of the statute, and had sought to place him in a position in which he would have dominated the conduct of affairs and constituted himself the principal authority in matters of local self-government. Mr. Telang had objected to the clause on the first reading and had rightly characterized it as the keynote of the Bill Its alteration, therefore, was a matter of importance, and purged the measure of its most objectionable feature.

To the part played by Pherozeshah in bringing about this and other modifications, his life-long friend and colleague, Dinshaw Wacha, has borne a testimony which will not be regarded as exaggerated:

"His patient, presevering and convincing advocacy of the amendments after amendments which he proposed were principally, nay, almost wholly, instrumental in casting the Bill in an entirely different shape from that in which it had been originally moulded by Mr. Naylor. Of this colossal labour, this expenditure of time and mental energy of a very high order, the public have little or no knowledge. He had the largest share of all his other colleagues in modifying each and all the original sections."

Though the Select Committee's deliberations had served to liberalize the Bill in many important particulars, several features of it were still open to objection, and the Corporation took up a strong position with regard to them. In the course of a fresh representation it made on the subject, it observed:

"The Corporation are anxious that their view of the case should not be ignored; either they are, or they are not, to be the governing body of this city. If they are to be the governing body, they should be entrusted with full powers to carry out what they believe to be right and best; if they are not to be the governing body, there is then no apparent necessity for their existence."

This bold statement of the case was worthy of the Corporation of those days, consisting as it did of representatives of the people noted for their ability and strength of character, and of a strong and independent body of Europeans who served the city with singular zeal and devotion.

It is unnecessary to do more than dip into the pages which record the long and often interesting discussions which took place in the Council when the Bill was considered section by section. For our purpose, it is enough to say that many of the objectionable features, which still clung to the Bill when it emerged from the Select Committee, were removed by the strenuous efforts of Pherozeshah and Telang, ably backed by Sir Frank Forbes Adam, one of the most liberal-minded merchant princes of the day.

The result was due in part also to the very fair attitude which was adopted by Lord Reay, a genuine lover of freedom, and by the official spokesmen who piloted the Bill through the Council. We have, in consequence, in the Act of 1888, a close approximation to the ideal of municipal government cherished by Telang, namely, "a strong exe-

cutive responsible to the Corporation, and an enlightened Corporation watchful over its executive". Those who assisted in bringing about the desired consummation might well have been proud of their handwork.

On the third reading of the Bill, Pherozeshah characterized it as an eminently workable and practicable measure. It was drawn on sound principles—sound in theory and tested by long experience. It had carefully steered clear of two pitfalls. On the one hand, it had avoided the blunder of making the Commissioner anything more than the executive officer of the supreme administrative body, which was the Corporation. On the other, it had resisted the temptation of abolishing the Commissioner in favour of executive committees or councils, or of changing the mode of his appointment.

Pherozeshah, in his final remarks on the Bill, observed that the prospect of its success would not simply be in its own excellence: it would depend in a great measure on its being worked in that combined spirit of enlightened zeal and public spirit, and of sound practical commonsense, which had distinguished the conduct of municipal affairs in the past. He was confident that it would be worked in that spirit, and that it would "add fresh laurels to the municipal fame of this city."

The prediction has been amply fulfilled. By the manner in which she has administered her affairs, Bombay has added to her reputation for political sobriety and capacity. This has been due in a considerable measure to the life-long labours of Pherozeshah himself. As the Duke of Connaught who was associated with him when the Act of 1888 was being moulded in the Legislative Council, observed long after, the municipal constitution of Bombay "bears the indelible mark of genius impressed upon it by the

late Sir Pherozeshah Mehta", whom he was proud to remember as a friend.

For more than a generation, his personality dominated the stage. When he quitted it, he left a void, which may never be filled. But his work endures, and the spirit which he has infused in the administration of local affairs will continue, let us hope, to inspire succeeding generations, and help to maintain the proud position which the Bombay Corporation has so long occupied among self governing institutions in the country.

Chapter XI

PROFESSIONAL SUCCESSES

1887—1889

THE qualities which placed Pherozeshah in the forefront of Indian politicians also brought him to the front rank in his profession. Courage, independence and skill in argument are naturally as much prized by parties to a litigation as by the general public. The resourceful debater was equally sought after in courts of law as in the council chamber or on the platform.

All over Gujarat and Kathiawar his services were in continual request. His impressive presence, polished manners and elegant attire—not to forget the velvet collar which adorned his coat—lent distinction to his personality, and marked him out from his contemporaries. Wherever he was wanted, he went in sort of state, with a travelling paraphernalia which was something to wonder at, and which often included a barber!

His extremely fastidious habits, which had to be scrupulously respected, added to the awe in which he was held by his clients and by the public generally. The combined battery of these forces bore down alike on the presiding judge and the opposing counsel and witnesses. Add to all these attributes of a skilful advocacy, and it is not surprising that his forensic triumphs were as great as any he achieved in the sphere of public life.

In 1887, we find Pherozeshah engaged in two cases which attracted considerable attention at the time. One was what was known as the Municipal Octroi case, in

which a respected citizen of Broach, Mr. Edulji Muncherji, was charged with breach of trust. Messrs. Jardine and Pherozeshah defended the accused and, after a lengthy hearing, secured his acquittal.

The verdict aroused considerable enthusiasm, and the more energetic among the good folks of Broach wanted to drag the carriage of the victorious counsel from the court to the bungalow where they were staying. The latter having declined the honour, their admirers had to content themselves with giving the heroes a hearty send-off.

Another *cause celebre* in which Pherozeshah was engaged, and which added considerably to this reputation was the Cambay Inquiry which took place in the early part of 1887. In this trial, Mr. Wilson, the Collector of Kaira, stood charged with having made indecent overtures to a daughter of the Diwan of Cambay.

The high position of the parties and the nature of the offence invested the inquiry with a great deal of importance, and public interest was excited in an unusual degree. The Government of Lord Reay, distinguished for the courage with which it dealt with moral lapses on the part of its servants, however highly-placed or influential, appointed a commission of inquiry consisting of two responsible officials.

Mr. Inverarity, one of the greatest advocates who have ever practised in Indian courts, was engaged on behalf of the accused, and Pherozeshah appeared for the complainant. The inquiry was held at Ahmedabad. In the absence of suitable accommodation, Pherozeshah and the attorney instructing him had to put up at the refreshment rooms at the railway station.

After a lengthy hearing, Mr. Wilson was found guilty of the charge laid against him, and this decision of the Commissioners was endorsed by the Government of Lord Reay

after a careful consideration of the evidence in the case. Mr. Wilson appealed to the Secretary of State, tendering his resignation from service at the same time, and had the satisfaction of having his character duly white-washed.

* * *

Ever since the Ilbert Bill agitation had quickened political life in the country, the Bombay leaders, and particularly the brilliant triumvirate—Tyabji, Telang and Pherozeshah—were carrying on a ceaseless campaign for reforms in every branch of the administration. From various platforms and through diverse organizations, they laboured to promote the public good; but they were handicapped by the want of a newspaper which would support their policy, and inculcate from day to day the principles for which they stood. *The Times of India* was frankly anti-Indian in most of its views, and though the *Bombay Gazette* was sympathetic in its general attitude towards Indian aspirations it could not be regarded as expressing the popular point of view.

Calcutta, Madras and even places of lesser importance boasted of one or two national organs, but 'the first city in India' had apparently not the public spirit and enthusiasm to found and maintain an English daily conducted from the Indian standpoint.

It was with a view to wiping out this reproach and supplying a real want, that Pherozeshah in partnership with a kell-known journalist, Mr. Jehangir Murzban, undertook in 1888 to resuscitate the *Advocate of India*, which was languishing at the time. It was then under the control of Dr. Blaney, that eminent citizen, whose manifold services to Bombay were afterwards rewarded by a grateful people with a statue erected in his life-time.

The necessary arrangements were made and the

proprietorship of the paper changed hands. In announcing that fact, the new management told the public what its policy was going to be in an article which is believed to have been written by Pherozeshah. After stating that those who had the direction of the paper in their hands had no intention of making rash promises of any sort, beyond that they would endeavour to discuss all public questions in a way which would promote the best interests of the country, the article went on to say:

"There is, therefore, room in this Presidency for an English daily which would present Indian phenomena and facts, and approach and treat all Indian questions from an Indian point of view. We trust that this can be done with moderation as well as independence.

"We hope to steer clear of two pitfalls, into one or other of which people in this country are apt to tumble in forming their judgments of men and events. We shall no more presume that all Englishmen, official or non-official, are malignant tyrants till they prove themselves the contrary, than we shall countenance the presumption that all natives, and especially educated natives, are disloyal, seditious and generally ill-conditioned, till they establish their innocence. We steadily refuse to believe that Englishmen have a monopoly of one moiety of the sins in the decalogue, and the natives of this country of the other."

* * *

In July 1889, Pherozeshah was elected Dean of the Faculty of Arts in the Bombay University. His rise to a position of influence in the University was somewhat rapid. Though his connection with it dated back to the year 1868, when he was appointed a Fellow on the recommendation

of Sir Alexander Grant, for some years he took no very active interest in the deliberations of the Senate.

It was not till 1886, when he had attained eminence in other walks of life, that he began to play a leading part in the affairs of the University. About that time he joined in the discussion of various matters of importance. One of them related to the introduction of French as a second language in the curriculum of the University. Pherozeshah strongly supported the proposal, which had been moved by Mr. Justice Jardine and urged that the excellence of English literature was no reason why other modern languages should not be admitted. Students ought to be free to gather their knowledge from all sources. This view commended itself to a majority of the Senate, and the proposition was carried in spite of considerable opposition based on ancient prejudices.

Pherozeshah's interest in the cause of education was manifested in various other ways. He became one of the promoters of the Graduates' Association which was started in Bombay in April 1886. For the first few years, the Association showed considerable activity. It memorialized the University and the Government on all manner of educational questions, and did much useful work. Among other things, it obtained from the University the right of representation for graduates on the Senate. Pherozeshah's connection with it continued to the end. Two years after it was started he was appointed President, and enjoyed that position for a number of years.

Chapter XII

LEADER OF THE CONGRESS

1889-1890

THE national organization, brought into existence in Bombay in 1885 by the labours of a handful of patriots, had lived through four eventful years. Ushered into the world under the happiest of auspices, its growing activities soon created suspicion and alarm in the minds of Englishmen, official and non-official, and the Congress became an object of abuse and ridicule, showered upon it with an extravagance which defeated its own object.

The movement spread far and wide, and speedily gathered strength and influence in every part of the country. The modest number of 72 delegates, who had gathered in Bombay in 1885, had mounted up to 412 the year after and had shown a progressive rise.

When the Congress met at Allahabad in 1888, it did so in an atmosphere of bitterness and strife because of the active campaign of misrepresentation and vilification launched by Anglo-India and officialdom and the Press which represented them.

The Reception Committee had great difficulty in finding a site, and it was only when a private mansion with extensive grounds was secured through the patriotic efforts of a certain nobleman, that the Congress was able to overcome the obstructions placed in its way. But this was not all. Anti-Congress propaganda had been started, unfortunately, by an "array of illiterate knights and rajahs who atone for their defective education by the violence of their

expletives".

Authoritative official condemnation was not wanting, either. In a famous speech at the St. Andrew's dinner in Calcutta on December 30, 1888, Lord Dufferin, who was in a sense the originator of the Congress movement, denounced its ideals and methods in language which has often and often been quoted.

"Some intelligent, loyal, patriotic and well-meaning men," said he, "are desirous of taking, I will not say a further step in advance, but a very big jump into the unknown, by the application to India of democratic methods of government, and the adoption of a parliamentary system which England herself has reached by slow degrees, and through the discipline of many centuries." His Lordship ended by characterising the educated classes as a "microscopic minority", and their demand for representative institutions as eminently unconstitutional.

Such was the atmosphere in which the Congress held its fourth session at Allahabad during the Christmas of 1888, under the presidentship of Mr. George Yule, one of the leading members of the English community in Calcutta. No "disappointed civilian" was he, nor a glib-tongued lawyer, but a prosperous merchant with no grievances to air, nor prejudices against his caste.

As may be expected from the opposition encountered by the Congress, the proceedings were of a more than usually lively character. The presence of Raja Shivaprasad—a henchman of Sir Auckland Colvin—who had got himself elected as a delegate with the object of introducing discord within the ranks, threatened at one time to create serious disorder, but the leading spirits of the Congress defeated the attempt, and the obnoxious Raja was quietly escorted home. The presidential address was

a weighty and dignified pronouncement. A strong note of optimism and faith in the future ran through the utterance:

"All movements of the kind in which we are concerned pass through several phases as they run their course. The first is one of ridicule. That is followed, as the movement progresses, by one of abuse, which is usually succeeded by partial concession and misapprehension of aim, accompanied by warnings against taking 'big jumps into the unknown'. The final stage of all is a substantial adoption of the object of the movement with some expression of surprise that it was not adopted before."

Pherozehah's contribution to the deliberations was confined to two or three subjects. He moved the proposition for the appointment of the President in a few felicitous phrases. He spoke with effect on the resolutions dealing with the public service question to which he had given much thought and study.

In January 1888, he had been invited to give evidence before the Public Service Commission, which had been appointed after the failure of the Statutory Service had been recognized on all hands. Both in his written and oral evidence, Pherozeshah had taken up a strong attitude.

The resolution on the subject was proposed by Mr. Eardley Norton, one of the earliest and warmest supporters of the Congress, with a reputation for ability and independence which stood very high. It expressed appreciation of the concessions proposed by the Commission, but emphatically declared that full justice would never be done to the people of the country until the Civil Service examination was held simultaneously in England and in India.

Pherozeshah seconded the proposition and put the case for the larger employment of the people of the coun-

try on the ground of political as well as economic necessity. Dadabhai Naoroji had over and over again pointed out that apart from every other consideration, it was sound economy to associate Indians more closely in the administration of the country. Pherozeshah, going further, contended that the political necessity was even greater than the economic.

How far this economic and political necessity of associating Indians more closely with the administration was recognized, may be gauged from the fact that more than fifteen years later the figures compiled by Lord Curzon's Government themselves showed that out of 1,370 appointments, carrying more than Rs. 1,000 a month, only 92 were held by Indians. Such was the recognition of the principle laid down as far back as 1883 that there should be no 'governing caste' in India.

Another interesting subject for discussion before the Allahabad session related to the Arms Act. The resolution before the Congress was an affirmation of that which had been passed a year previous, and declared that the Act should be so modified as to "enable all persons to possess and wear arms, unless debarred therefrom, either as individuals or members of particular communities or classes, by the orders of the Government of India (or any local authority empowered by the Government of India in that behalf) for reasons to be recorded in writing and duly published."

This proposition evoked some opposition, and Mr. Telang was among those who thought that it was dictated purely by sentimental considerations. He feared the use that might be made of an indiscriminate liberty to carry arms.

Pherozeshah, who followed him, maintained on the other hand, that, whatever might be the sentimental aspect

of the question, there was one very sound reason in support of the proposition, and that was that "you cannot, and ought not to emasculate a whole nation." Once the Indian people became emasculated, it would be a very long time before they would recover their manliness and vigour.

This sentiment and a story which illustrated it appealed greatly to the audience, and after some further discussion, in the course of which Mr. Surendranath Bannerji supported the proposition, it was put to the vote and carried by a large majority.

We must now leave the Allahabad Congress and hurry on to the one held in Bombay in the following year.

From the personality of those who took a leading part in it, and the numbers that consequently flocked to it, the Bombay session proved to be the most memorable gathering of the "unconventional convention" that had yet taken place. Very few Congresses indeed have surpassed it in brilliance. The presidential chair was occupied by Sir William Wedderburn, who had retired from service two years previously, loved and honoured by all who had come in contact with him.

The privilege of welcoming the delegates to this historic Congress was conceded to Pherozeshah as an appropriate recognition of the fact of his being the most outstanding figure in the public life of western India at this period. A more popular selection could not have been made, at least from the point of view of a Bombay audience. But the biggest 'draw' of all was the presence of that great champion of democracy, Charles Bradlaugh, whose magnetic eloquence had thrilled vast audiences in his native land, and whose stormy career had deeply struck the public imagination. He had been persuaded to take an interest in Indian questions by the friends of this country

in England, and had addressed a number of public meetings. He had prepared a draft Bill for introduction into Parliament for the reform of the Legislative Councils. It embodied in legal form what was then believed to be the general view of the Congress on the subject.

It was a great gathering. The number of delegates was 1,889, corresponding curiously with the year in which the session was held.

It was a worthy occasion for the exercise of Pherozeshah's oratorical gifts, and he rose splendidly to it. Sarcasm, banter, ridicule were among the weapons with which he usually confounded his opponents, and he employed them with deadly effect in his speech of welcome to the delegates of the Congress.

The speech was well received. "The whole assembly laughed and cheered and clapped their hands with an excited delight, which showed how they echoed the sentiments expressed by the speakers."

A noteworthy feature of the session was an address given to Mr. Bradlaugh on behalf of the Congress, in terms of a resolution moved by Pherozeshah on the second day of the session in response to a widespread desire.

The chair was taken by Pherozeshah, who, in a few chosen words, asked Sir Willian Wedderburn to present the address on behalf of the Congress. That having been done, Mr. Bradlaugh, still weak and feeble from his recent illness, addressed the audience in words that went straight to the heart of his hearers. He spoke to them of their limitations; he encouraged them to persevere ceaselessly, and he reminded them that great reforms had always been slowly won. "Those who first enterprised them were called seditious, and sometimes sent to jail as criminals; but the speech and thought live on. No imprisonment can crush

a truth; it may hinder if for a moment, it may delay it for an hour, but it gets an electric elasticity inside the dungeon walls, and it grows and moves the whole world when it comes out."

From the chairmanship of the Reception Committee to the presidentship of the Congress is a natural transition, and in Pherozeshah's case it took place rapidly. The very next year after the Bombay Congress, he found himself installed in the presidential chair in Calcutta, an honour than which there was then no higher to which a worker in the national cause could aspire.

The election gave universal satisfaction. Public opinion was reflected in the Press, and many newspapers contained appreciatory references to the President-elect.

In Calcutta, Pherozeshah was received with the honours which are usually accorded to the President-elect. The national movement, of which the Congress was the embodiment, was rapidly gaining in strength and influence, and the attendance at the Calcutta session was large, as many as 8,000 people being present on the first day.

The presidential address was in a vein characteristic of the Bombay leader. There were no attempts at originality, no lofty flights of imagination. It was a sober, eminently practical and refreshingly vigorous presentment of the Congress cause. It was a sort of speech which, with certain differences in phraseology, might have been made on the floor of the House of Commons from the Opposition front bench.

After thanking those present for the honour they had done him, the President referred to the mischievous attempts which had been made to isolate the Parsis from the movement. He declared his creed of nationalism in words which have often been quoted:

"To my mind, a Parsi is a better and truer Parsi, as a Mohamedan, or a Hindu, is a better and truer Mohamedan or Hindu, the more he is attached to the land which gave him birth, the more he is bound in brotherly relations and affection to all the children of the soil, the more he recognizes the fraternity of all the native communities of the country, and the immutable bond which binds them together in the pursuit of common aims and objects under a common government."

The President next dealt with the charge which had often been levelled that the Congress was demanding full-blown representative institutions, which in England had been the growth of centuries. He showed that they had not learned the lessons of history so badly as to make any such foolish demands. They recognized the necessity and inevitability of a slow and cautious advance.

If anybody could be charged with defying the teachings of history and experience, it was their opponents when they talked of sitting still and doing nothing, until such time as the masses were educated and able to understand their rights and privileges. Till then, apparently, their interests were to be left in the safe keeping of a benevolent bureaucracy, which would look after them better than their own countrymen could be expected to do. In Pherozeshah's opinion, these pretensions were ridiculous:

"We have also proved that, in spite of our education, and even with our racial and religious differences, the microscopic minority can far better and far more intuitively represent the needs and the aspirations of their own countrymen than the still more microscopic minority of the omniscient district officers, whose colloquial knowledge of the Indian languages seldom rises above the knowledge of English possessed, for instance, by French waiters at

Paris hotels which proudly blazon forth the legend, *Ici on parle Anglais.*"

After some more sundry 'sparring', Pherozeshah turned to deal with the question which was most agitating men's minds at the moment, the reform of the Legislative Councils. He began with Mr. Bradlaugh's Bill, drawn on the lines sketched and formulated at the Congress.

Two important results, he said, had flowed from the inception of that measure. One was that it had evoked criticism of a most useful character, particularly from men like Sir William Hunter and Sir Richard Garth, which indicated the lines on which the Bill needed to be modified. The next result was that "it at once dispelled the fit of profound cogitation, in which men at the head of Indian affairs are so apt to be lost that they can never spontaneously recover from it."

Lord Cross's Indian Councils Bill had promptly seen the light of day in the House of Lords. It was, however, a measure of a halting and unsatisfactory character. The Prime Minister and the Secretary of State seemed to have been obsessed with a conception of the Indian people as a sort of Oliver Twist, always asking for more, to whom it would be therefore a piece of prudent policy to begin with offering as little as possible.

"The rights of interpellation and of the discussion of the Budget were granted, but the living forces of the elective principle which alone could properly work them, were not breathed into the organization of the enlarged Councils."

Lord Salisbury had sought to justify this grave defect in the Bill on the ground that the principle of election or government by representation was not an Eastern idea, and that it did not fit Eastern traditions or minds. Some

portion of the address was, accordingly, devoted to exposing the fallacy of the Prime Minister's sweeping generalization. Pherozeshah showed, on the authority of Sir Henry Maine and Mr. Anstey, as great a scholar as he was a lawyer, that some form of self-government had existed in this country from very remote times.

Perhaps the best answer to Lord Salisbury's dictum was that given by the *Manchester Guardian,* then, as now, the sturdy champion of Liberalism, unflinching in its application to every part of the world.

"Lord Salisbury's great argument is that the elective principle is not an Eastern idea. It is sufficient perhaps to say that English rule is not an Eastern idea, yet it prevails in India, and that it is by Western rather than by Eastern ideas that it is to be strengthened and made permanent. Representation is the mark of our political liberties."

It would be tedious to follow the presidential address in the many controversial points which it discussed, but an observation dealing with a well-worn argument deserves to be recorded. Referring to the parrot cry which the opponents of the Congress were uttering from a hundred points of vantage, that the voice of the Congress was but the voice of a section and not of the people, Pherozeshah observed:

"If the masses were capable of giving articulate expression to definite political demands, then the time would have arrived, not for consultative Councils, but for representative institutions. It is because they are still unable to do so that the function and the duty devolve upon their educated and enlightened compatriots to feel, to understand and to interpret their grievances and requirements, and to suggest and to indicate how these can be best redressed and met. History teaches us that such has

been the law of widening progress in all ages and all countries, notably in England itself.

Enthusiastic cheering greeted the conclusion of this eloquent and manly address, which created a deep impression in the country.

Chapter XIII

GOVERNMENT AND THE CORPORATION

1890—1892

IN April 1890, Lord Reay laid down the reins of office amidst the general regret of the Presidency, whose fortunes he had guided with such conspicuous ability and high sense of duty. He left an enduring monument behind him in the charter of local self-government which he was largely instrumental in giving to Bombay, the measures for the advancement of technical education which he carried out and the spirit of progress which he generally infused into the administration. Bombay gave the departing Governor a send-off worthy of the man.

Shortly after Lord Reay left the country, the relations between the Government and the Corporation, never very happy, entered upon an acute phase. On the one hand was a bureaucracy with its traditional contempt for any other point of view but its own, determined to impose its will on an institution which was intended to be self-governing. On the other hand was a Corporation which, led by Pherozeshah and other stalwarts, was extremely jealous of its dignity and independence, and resentful of dictation from outside. Occasions for conflict were not wanting in those days, when many questions of policy had yet to be settled between the two bodies.

Pherozeshah's ascendancy in the civic chamber at this time was undisputed. Few proposals which encountered his hostility had a chance of being carried, and Commissioners thought twice before they crossed swords with him;

they felt comfortable when they secured his support for their policy and measures. As one of them wrote, if Pherozeshah failed to be convinced about any question, the probability was that the Corporation would fail to be convinced as well. A proud position for anyone to occupy, and a dangerous one in the case of a lesser man. Be it said, however, to the lasting credit of Pherozeshah, that he never abused the power he had won by sheer force of character, ability and devotion to civic affairs.

One characteristic of his was particularly notable. Though continually fighting against those in authority, he was always anxious to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's. He never lent himself to bitter or unreasonable criticisms of the executive, but stood up as its champion whenever he thought it was unfairly treated.

* * *

One of the most notable events in the political history of modern India was the election of Dadabhai Naoroji to the British Parliament in 1892. By persistent and heroic efforts, the little "Black Man", as he was dubbed by the Marquis of Salisbury, had at length succeeded in effecting a breach in the jealously guarded citadel of St. Stephen's. The electors of Central Finsbury had yielded to his untiring energy and determined purpose, and to their eternal honour had returned him to Parliament as their representative. The news sent a thrill of joy through the length and breadth of the land, and in every quarter there were demonstrations of the pride and satisfaction with which the people regarded the remarkable triumph of their countryman.

A public meeting was held in Bombay under the auspices of the Bombay Presidency Association on July 23, 1892, when Sir Dinshaw Petit was voted to the chair. The

Governor, Lord Harris, wired a graceful message that he had much pleasure in placing the Town Hall at the disposal of the organizers of the meeting.

The principal resolution was moved by Pherozeshah. He described the struggle upon which Dadabhai Naoroji had been engaged as a Seven Years' War, the opening campaign of which had taken place in the rooms of the Association in 1885, when the important decision had been reached to carry the war, as it were, into the enemy's country. The speaker recalled with pardonable pride that on that occasion he had strongly advocated the taking of Indian questions into the arena of party politics, a view which, though unsupported at the time, had since found acceptance with Dadabhai and other political associates. He claimed that that policy had been amply vindicated, and he reiterated his conviction that there was no salvation for India until Indian questions were sifted in the fierce light of Party contention.

After this preliminary discourse, Pherozeshah turned to pronounce a handsome eulogy on the political *rishi* at whose feet he had sat with a number of other young men who had since distinguished themselves. Referring to the comments of *The Pioneer* and other kindred critics, who had never felt a generous impulse towards the people of this country and who did not see in the event anything remarkable or romantic, Pherozeshah observed:

"But it may be pardoned to us, if nurtured in some of the noblest traditions of English history, we allow ourselves for a moment to be carried away by sentiment, if we venture to contemplate with some degree of emotion and reverence the spectacle of a native of India entering that very assembly in which, in terms of immortal eloquence, Burke and Fox and Sheridan pleaded the cause of righte-

ousness in the government of this country, where Macaulay saw in dim but prophetic vision the dawn of that day which may bring up our political enfranchisement, where Bright and Fawcett and Bradlaugh raised their voices for justice to millions of voiceless and alien people."

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In October 1892, Pherozeshah was elected President of the fifth Bombay Provincial Conference, which was to be held at Poona in the following month. His inaugural address wandered over a wide range of subjects, and was marked as usual by incisive logic and mordant humour.

A large portion of it was taken up with a vigorous refutation of the contentions advanced in an address delivered some time before by Mr. Lee-Warner, an inveterate enemy of Indian aspirations. The question uppermost in the minds of people at that moment was the proposed enlargement and reform of the Legislative Councils. Mr. Lee-Warner, in his address, had trotted out the familiar bureaucratic slogan that social and moral reform must take precedence over political regeneration, and that the Indian demand for representative institutions was contrary to the laws of nature, and unwarranted by the lessons of history. "No representative assembly" he had said, "whether of the nation or of the country is complete without the presence of those whom in India you would describe as low castes. I cannot fill in the description in greater detail, but I think you will admit that the healthy growth of the representative system implies a ground prepared by not merely phrases, but by the constant action and re-action of equality, fraternity and self-sacrifice, welding together a nation, before a Council to represent a nation can be thought of."

Pherozeshah examined the argument in the light of

English history, and had no difficulty in showing that it did not support the lecturer's sweeping generalizations.

"It is clear that the lessons of English history are against Mr. Lee-Warner's speculations. If England had waited, as according to him it ought to have, till a full representation of the lower classes and the masses was secured, before thinking of a Parliament, then we should have never heard of the English Parliament at all.

"It is unscientific, it is unhistorical to talk of not having a representative assembly at all till only a complete one could be had. The laws of nature as well as the lessons of history both teach us that beginnings may well be incomplete and inadequate, that too much must not be made of fanciful difficulties about the rights of minorities and lower classes, and that the work of completion should be left to time."

Chapter XIV

IN THE BOMBAY COUNCIL

1893

WE must pass over some of the events which crowded upon each other at this period. The endless discussions about the police charges, the controversy over the appointment of an Executive Engineer for the Municipality, the curtailment of the Government grant to the University, these and other matters held public attention at the time, but cannot be regarded as of more than ephemeral interest.

They served, if possible, to emphasize the dominant position which Pherozeshah had established for himself in civic affairs; by his great gifts and devotion to the interests of the city he had become by this time a virtual dictator in the public life of Bombay. People from all parts of the Presidency sought his advice on all manner of public questions, and on one occasion, Lord Harris paid him the compliment of consulting him about the choice of the Municipal Commissioner.

As yet, however, his influence in the country had not attained the height which it was destined to achieve a few years later. It was only from the Congress platform that Indian leaders could get the ear of their countrymen in various parts of India.

Wider vistas, however, were now to open out before them with the enlargement of the Councils which took place in 1892. It is true, the representation conceded was of a very limited character, and the powers entrusted to the popular element were rigidly circumscribed. But the

reform gave the representatives of the people their opportunity, if only of citicizing the administration; and interest in the proceedings of the Councils became at once more keen and widespread.

The first non-official member in all India to be elected to the new Councils was Pherozeshah, who was unanimously chosen by the Corporation—which had been given the right of returning one member—as their representative at a meeting held on May 4, 1893.

The first meeting of the Local Legislative Council was held on July 27, 1893, at Poona, where the Government of Bombay secluded themselves for more than four months in the year. The chosen few who had found admission into the sacred portals of the Council Hall were there, eager to grasp with both hands the opportunities that had been opened out to the representatives of the people.

Among Pherozeshah's colleagues were Messrs. Ranade, Naoroji N. Wadia and Chimanlal Setalvad. The right of interpellation and discussion of the Budget, conceded for the first time, was exercised by them with a freedom and knowledge which must have silenced those scoffers who held the representative principle in contempt.

Pherozeshah's criticisms were mostly confined to questions relating to the Government grant to the University, the contribution of the Corporation to the City Police Force and the cost of the separation of judicial from executive functions. On all these points he spoke with an earnestness derived from his keen interest in the subject.

Touching on the last issue, he said that the real obstacle in the way of the desired reform lay not in the cost of the change, as was so often urged, but in the fact that executive officers were not willing to consent to a measure which they thought would materially diminish their power

and importance. That really must be regarded as the motive power of the determined opposition which the bureaucracy had offered to the inauguration of a reform, blessed in principle by the highest authorities in England and in India.

* * *

A few days before the new Councils met, the question of simultaneous examinations for the Civil Service again occupied public attention. The unwearying efforts of Dadabhai Naoroji and the small band of Englishmen, whom he had inspired with some of his love and enthusiasm for India, at length succeeded in gaining from the highest legislature in the Empire the just recognition of the demand of Indians for an adequate share in the administration of their country.

On June 2, 1893, a motion was carried in the House of Commons: "That all open competitive examinations heretofore held in England alone for appointments to the Civil Services of India, shall henceforth be held simultaneously both in India and England, such examinations in both countries being identical in their nature, and all who compete being finally classified in one list according to merit."

The fortune of the ballot gave Mr. Herbert Paul the privilege of moving the resolution, and he did it with a lucidity and persuasiveness which overcame hesitation and indifference and secured a narrow majority in a somewhat thin House.

Dadabhai Naoroji was one of the tellers for the resolution, and according to a chronicler, "the House of Commons could not fail to see his intense delight on being handed the paper recording the principle for which he had worked with indefatigable industry during so many years."

The division list showed that 84 members had voted for the resolution and 76 against, the minority including almost all the occupants of the front Treasury benches.

The result was hailed throughout the country as a signal triumph of the principle for which educated India had been fighting for nearly a generation. The general enthusiasm received a setback, however, when gradually opposition began to manifest itself in influential quarters against the acceptance of what was regarded as nothing more than a snap vote. Public meetings were, consequently, held all over the country in support of the resolution, and as a counter-blast to the official agitation against the introduction of a change which was calculated to strike at the root of the Englishman's monopoly of power.

Bombay was not behind the rest of the country, and a crowded meeting was held in the Framji Cowasji Institute on July 15, at which Pherozeshah presided. Among the speakers were Gokhale, Javerilal Yajnik and other prominent men. Besides the question of Simultaneous Examinations, the Home Military Charges of India were also discussed at the meeting.

In his remarks from the chair, Pherozeshah asked the audience to remember that experience had proved that whatever hopes and chances India had would materialise, sooner or later, through Parliament alone. He saw it as an augury of hope that the Secretary of State, the Earl of Kimberly, had been obliged to declare that the question of Simultaneous Examinations—which was fondly supposed to have been throttled, and to have received its last rites at the hands of the Public Service Commission—required to be reopened and re-examined in its entirety.

With a few other observations, the Chairman turned to the question of the Home Military Charges, showing a

consideration for other speakers not often to be seen among those who find themselves first in possession of a platform. His remarks on the subject were brief and telling. He characterised the treatment meted out to India as a grave scandal.

Lord Northbrook, whose sympathies were always alive, had shown by facts and figures in the House of Lords that, in a period of fourteen years, India had been compelled to pay four million sterling for charges which did not concern her. Nothing could be more eloquent than these figures, and it was as well that Pherozeshah left them to tell their own tale. There was no need to elaborate the story of the 'melancholy meanness' of which British statesmen have so often shown themselves capable in spite of all the unctuous protestations about the lofty purpose of England's mission in India.

Chapter XV

WORK IN THE IMPERIAL COUNCIL

1894-1895

WITH the creation of the enlarged Councils under the Act of 1891, Pherozeshah emerged into a larger arena. His activities in the Congress, the University and the Corporation had given him already a commanding position among the public men of India. But it was not until he found admission into the Supreme Legislative Council that his brilliant intellect and remarkable powers of debate obtained their proper field of exercise, and disclosed to the public the full force of his personality.

The election took place in October 1893. According to the rules framed under the Indian Councils Act, the non-official members of the Provincial Legislative Council had the right of sending one representative to the Viceregal Council, and their choice unanimously fell on Pherozeshah.

Recognition of a different kind came to Pherozeshah shortly afterwards and a short digression must be made in order to notice it. The New Year's Honours List of 1894 contained the announcement of the conferment on him of the C.I.E. The distinction was very modest indeed but such as it was, it gave general satisfaction, and there was a chorus of congratulations from all quarters.

The esteem in which Pherozeshah was widely held at this stage of his career was greatly increased by the splendid work he did in the Supreme Council. On the numerous questions that came up before that body, he spoke with an ability, fearlessness and mastery of argument which delight-

ed his many admirers all over the country. He introduced indeed a new spirit into the Council, and while the country applauded, officialdom was furious at the change of tone and temper in the Opposition which he had brought about.

The first measure of importance, in the discussion of which Pherozeshah made himself felt, was the Cotton Duties Bill, which came up for consideration in the Imperial Council in December 1894. We have dealt with the circumstances under which Lancashire was allowed to exploit India in 1879 by the abolition of the Cotton Duties. With the advent of Lord Ripon, a robust Free-trader, and aided by the prosperous condition of the finances of 1882, all import duties were abolished, except on salt and liquor, by the then Finance Minister, Sir Evelyn Baring.

Financial exigencies, however, rendered necessary in 1894 the practical restoration of the tariff of 1875, under which everything had to be imported at a five per cent duty. That the Lancashire interest might not suffer thereby, Sir Henry Fowler, who was then the presiding deity at Whitehall, imposed an excise duty of five per cent on all cotton yarns below 30s, to which the Government of India had to yield, eliciting from *The Times of India* the remark that the forces of China had not surrendered more helplessly before their pursuing enemies than Lord Elgin's Government had done before a masterful Secretary of State.

When the report of the Select Committee on the Cotton Duties Bill was presented in the Supreme Council Mr. Fazulbhoy Visram, a well-known figure in the commercial world of Bombay, moved an amendment with a view to remedying injustice. In supporting the amendment, Pherozeshah strongly attacked the principle underlying the Bill.

"That principle and that policy are that the infant

industries of India should be strangled in their birth if there is the remotest suspicion of their competing with English manufactures .....I protest against such a policy not only in its present immediate operation, but as establishing a most pernicious precedent."

Ultimately, the amendment was defeated by eleven votes to nine, and "for the first time in the history of British rule in India, a measure was placed upon the statute book which no one has ever dreamed of defending as being promoted in the interests of the country affected by it."

Another Bill which provoked a lively debate was that dealing with an amendment of the Cantonments Act of 1889. The manner in which it was introduced in the Imperial Council raised in an acute form the question of the constitutional relations between the "Great Moghul" at Simla and the less imposing but more irresponsible autocrat at Whitehall. The Legal Member in charge of it had admitted at the time of its introduction that it was a Bill which had been brought forward "by direction of Her Majesty's Government with the object of complying, if the Legislative Council should think fit to do so, with the requirements of the majority of the Commission which sat on the question of the examination in cantonments."

When the Bill came up for second reading, Sir Griffith Evans criticized the manner of its introduction, and dealt at some length with the position of the Council in relation to the Secretary of State for India. He protested against the latter's assumption of a legislative initiative which he did not think the constitution of the Indian Government intended he should assume. The Secretary of State had done so by virtue of his supreme executive control, but it was unconstitutional and in the nature of an usurpation, and if it was persisted in, it would lead to the straining of the

whole machinery of the Government of India.

Such spirited criticisms of the action of Whitehall undoubtedly lifted the debate from the region of the common place. But the point of view of Evans and another eminent representative of Bengal, though argued with considerable skill, was not quite correct. It was left to Pherozeshah to distinguish clearly between the vast and almost autocratic powers of the Viceroy in certain spheres with his subordination to the Secretary of State in others. He started by enunciating a principle which admitted of no dispute, *viz.*, that the government of the country was really in the hands of the House of Commons, which exercised its authority through ministers who possessed its confidence.

The Secretary of State had the authority of the House to sustain him, and the responsibility to carry out its behests by all lawful means open to him. August as the office of the Viceroy was, it could not be said it was independent of Parliament. This subordination was perfectly consistent with the possession of a large and preponderating measure of influence, which the opinions and recommendations of so highly placed an individual could not fail to command in the final decision of Indian questions.

Pherozeshah, for once, accepted this constitutional position without any regret. He did not believe in the theory of "the man on the spot", and he regarded the ultimate control of the House of Commons, exercised through the Secretary of State, as a more or less wholesome influence on Indian polity.

After his discourse on the constitutional aspect of the measure before the Council, Pherozeshah went on to deal with the genesis of the Bill, and showed that it was merely designed to give statutory form to that which was already

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the subject of rules and regulations, which in practice had given rise to various abuses.

At this point, he laid his finger on a grave defect of Indian legislation, *viz.*, the practice of reserving to executive authorities the power of making rules and regulations to provide for matters which ought to be included in the Acts themselves. Under such a system, according to him, assurance and undertakings were made to take the place of definite provisions, which were either forgotten, or what was more dangerous, interpreted in all sorts of wonderful ways.

The history of Indian legislation provides abundant instances—not the least notable being the Morley-Minto Reform scheme—of Acts charged with liberal intentions being shorn of all their progressive character by the reservation to Government of an indefinite power of making rules and regulations.

The Bill was referred to a Select Commitee, and having been modified to meet the objections raised against it, it was passed unanimously at the February sitting of the Council.

The activities of the legislative machine did not end here. It had several more Bills to grind out. We shall notice only one of them, which was the subject of severe criticism in the Council and outside, and which gave rise to an explosion of temper on the part of the Finance Member, which rendered Pherozeshah famous through the length and breadth of the land. This was a Bill for the amendment of the Police Act of 1861. Under the Act, the Local Government was empowered to quarter a punitive police force in any district which was found to be in a disturbed or dangerous state, and to recover the cost from the inhabitants thereof generally.

GANDHI SMARAKA GRANTHALAYA
BANGALORE-1.

The amending Bill sought to enable the authorities to recover the cost in certain cases from the turbulent section only, and not necessarily from all the inhabitants. It also sought to make it possible to levy contributions from absentee owners of property, when their action caused or contributed to the disturbed state of the locality. There were two other important alterations proposed, namely, the power to levy compensation for injury caused by the misconduct of any party, and to regulate processions which were likely to lead to breach of the public peace.

Under cloak of redressing a wrong, the Bill was in fact an attempt to invest magistrates with extraordinary powers in supersession of the ordinary courts of law. They were to have a free hand in singling out individuals for punishment. The guilty and the innocent were equally at the mercy of the executive. Those who lived in the disturbed area were just as much liable to punishment as absentee landlords who might be hundreds of miles away.

The measure was in fact nothing else but an attempt, as Pherozeshah characterized it, to convict and punish individuals without a judicial trial, under cover of executive measures for the preservation of order. This was an opinion which was not confined to noisy agitators, but, unfortunately for Government, was shared by some of its own officers. The language employed by Pherozeshah, which raised a breeze in the Council Hall, creating an atmospheric disturbance which was felt far and wide, was, therefore, none too strong:

"My Lord, I cannot conceive of legislation more empirical, more retrograde, more open to abuse, or more demoralizing. It is impossible not to see that it is a piece of that empirical legislation so dear to the heart of executive officers, which will not and cannot recognize the scienti-

fic fact that the punishment and suppression of crime, without injuring or oppressing innocence, must be controlled by judicial procedure, and cannot be safely left to be adjudged upon the opinion and moral certainties of men believing themselves to be capable, honest and conscientious...

"Empirical and retrograde as it is, this new proposed legislation would be no less demoralizing to the executive officers concerned. I have not the least desire to speak disparagingly of executive officers, most of whom, I have no doubt, are anxious to perform their duties conscientiously and to the best of their ability. But it would be idle to believe that they can be free from the biases, prejudices and defects of their class and position."

Sir James Westland, the Finance Member, was furious at the thought that anyone should venture to speak so irreverently as Pherozeshah had done to the idols of the official hierarchy. Sacrilegious hands had been laid on their fair name and reputation, and the Member felt horrified at the idea. His petulant outburst, the echoes of which were heard for a long time, may well be quoted in full:

"As the first member of Your Excellency's Executive Council who has an opportunity of speaking after extraordinary observations which have fallen from the Honourrable Mr. Mehta, I desire to enter a protest against the new spirit which he has introduced into this Council. I have never heard the conduct of the administrative officers of the Government, as a whole, mentioned here without admiration of the qualities they bring to the execution of their duty, and their anxious endeavour to do their work with even-handed justice.

"Today for the first time within the walls which have been distinguished by the presence, through half a century

and more, of the most eminent of the executive officers of Government, who have contributed to the framing and the consolidation of the Indian Empire, I hear them all arraigned as a class as biased, prejudiced, utterly incapable of doing the commonest justice, and unworthy of being relied on to do the duties which this legislature imposes upon them.

"From Your Excellency downwards, every executive officer falls under the ban of the Honourable Member's denunciations, and I for one protest against any Honourable Member so far forgetting the responsibility he owes to his position as to take advantage of it to impugn, by one general all-comprehensive accusation, not only the capacity but even the honesty and fairness of the members of a most distinguished Service—a Service of which it is my pride to have been a member."

This extraordinary outburst was quite uncalled for, and Pherozeshah immediately repudiated any intention of indulging in such general charges or imputations as the Finance Member had read into his observations. The incident set the country a-talking for weeks together. Sir James Westland's petulant criticisms had the effect, unexpected by their author, of bringing about a keener appreciation of the great work done by the Bombay member in the reformed Council.

It was felt that a "new spirit" had indeed been at work. The frank, free and fearless criticisms of Pherozeshah were felt to mark the beginnings of a new era in politics. It was a novel experience to find the acts and policies of the Government held up in their very presence to a merciless examination both as regards their intention and their methods. It was reckoned as something to the good of the modest measure of reform which had converted the Legisla-

tive Councils from being mere machines for the registration of official decrees and fiats into assemblies where the people's voice could be heard and a little daylight let into the mysterious processes which surround Government measures.

It was the recognition of the elective principle in the creation of the Councils, for which educated public opinion had fought so strenuously, that had made this possible. *The Tribune*, of Lahore, in its issue of January 30, 1895, put the issue very clearly in commenting on the work accomplished by Pherozeshah:

"There is one voice in the Imperial Legislative Council which has struck a note not yet heard inside the walls of the Council chamber. When the Hon. Mr. P. M. Mehta scornfully spoke of the exchange compensation during the debate on the Tariff Bill, the members of the Executive Council and very high officials winced for the first time.

"What they had been accustomed to read in newspapers, and to find in reports of public meetings, which they never attended, had at length broken through the inviolability of the Council hall, and the strong clear voice of fearless criticism rang upon their ears for the first time. For the first time also, the public saw what stuff some of the highest officials are made of...

"Sir James Westland unconsciously uttered a great truth when he spoke of the new spirit introduced by Mr. Mehta into the Council. Yes, there is a new spirit, not introduced by Mr. Mehta, but which has first found utterance through him. The new spirit was introduced by the Act of 1892."

It would be tedious to dwell over the passage of the Police Bill into law. It emerged from the Select Committee modified in a few particulars, but retaining most of its

objectionable features. As Pherozeshah observed, some paint and some powder had no doubt been used to soften the features, and new and flowing habiliments had been thrown over the gaunt spectre. But for all that, it remained essentially a measure designed to give District Magistrates, ostensibly for the purpose of prevention of crime and for the preservation of law and order, wide and autocratic powers, which would in practice be exercised by the police on whom the magistrates had by force of circumstances to lean very largely.

The Bill, in its final stages, had a somewhat rough passage. The thin lines of the Opposition, led by Pherozeshah, advanced again and again to the attack, but they left no impression on the solid phalanx that was arrayed against them. As Pherozeshah observed with a touch of biting sarcasm, on whichever side might be the arguments, the votes were certainly on the side of the Honourable Member who was in charge of the Bill. Amendments after amendments pressed by Pherozeshah, Babu Mohini Mohan Roy, the Maharaja of Durbhanga and Mr. Gangadhar Rao Chitnavis, the doyen of the Council, were thrown out, and the Bill passed into law substantially as it stood, and fresh weapons were added to the armoury of a police notorious for its corruption.

In the record of Pherozeshah's activities in the Council at this period, a brief reference must be made to the role he played as the spokesman of enlightened Hindu opinion on the question of the restitution of conjugal rights. The English ecclesiastical law provided for imprisonment as a method of compelling a refractory wife to obey a decree for restitution.

Before 1887, it was very doubtful whether such a law could apply to India. In that year, the Law Member,

Mr. Whitley Strokes, the author of the famous work on the Anglo-Indian Codes, seized with a desire for uniformity, introduced the clause for imprisonment in the Civil Procedure Code, which was then being amended. A large proportion of the lower classes in India found the change very welcome, and made considerable use of the procedure sanctioned by the law. This went on for some years until the famous Rukhmabai case brought out in an aggravated form the hardship inflicted in individual cases by the enforcement of the provision for imprisonment.

There was considerable agitation over the matter, and Government decided to take the first opportunity of amending the law so as to make imprisonment discretionary. Accordingly, when the amendment of the Civil Procedure Code was taken in hand in 1894, a clause was inserted in the Bill to that effect. In the Select Committee, however, orthodox Hindu opinion triumphed and the clause was deleted.

When the Bill came up for discussion on February 28, 1895, Pherozeshah moved for the re-insertion of the clause in a modified form, whereby the Courts were empowered to order in fit cases that a decree for restitution should not be enforced by imprisonment. He disclaimed all desire to meddle with so peculiar and complex a system of social life and religion as Hinduism, as he held that whatever reforms might be desirable and necessary should be left to be developed by the action of time and education. What he sought to do was to remove an excrescence which had been engrafted upon Hinduism by an extraneous jurisprudence, and he maintained he was representing the best Hindu opinion on the matter, the opinion which might, for instance, have been put forward by men like the late Mr. Telang. He did not agree with those who believed

that "the distinguishing features of the Hindu social system as regards the relations of the sexes were distrust and depression of women."

The Council, however, was influenced by the strength of conservative feeling manifested in and out of it against the change, and though Sir Alexander Miller and some other official members appeared to be in sympathy with the spirit of the amendment, the only member to support it, besides the mover, was Mr. Chitnavis, and Pherozeshah found that he was really not voicing, as he claimed, the conservative and orthodox view of the matter.

This record of work, accomplished during a strenuous and memorable session, may fittingly be brought to a close with a reference to the Budget debate. Under the Indian Councils Act of 1892, the submission of the financial statement to the Council provided practically the only opportunity of criticizing the administration and influencing its policy.

It became an annual feast at which oratorical fireworks were let off with reckless prodigality, and like all fireworks made a momentary impression and left no traces behind. The whole thing was more or less a solemn farce, and not a little tiresome. The official members regarded the long orations as the vapourings of amateurs not to be considered very seriously, and listened with as much patience as a bureaucracy, supremely conscious of its own wisdom, can command.

It was rarely that a Pherozeshah or a Gokhale appeared on the scene and made officialdom wince under the lash of their able and incisive criticisms. Their Budget speeches were something different from mere rhetorical exercises, and though the replies of official members were accustomed to strike a note of lofty superiority, it is not too much to say

the Treasury benches were never very happy during the ordeal.

On the present occasion, Pherozeshah directed his chief attack against the alarming growth of expenditure in India. He supported it by quoting the views of past Finance Members, Sir Auckland Colvin, Sir David Barbour and others. They had practically admitted that the constitution of the Government of India was such that there was no efficient control over expenditure, and that every member of the Cocuncil, except the Finance Minister, was not only not responsible for financial equilibrium, but was directly interested in spending money.

The enormous growth of expenditure had also been pointed out in an able representation submitted in March 1894, by the Bombay Presidency Association, of which Pherozeshah was then President. In dealing with that representation, the latter observed, the Finance Member had grown very facetious over the pretensions of native amateurs to show the most distinguished Service in the world how they ought to govern India, and his mirth had been specially aroused at their pretensions to teach him how to manage Indian finance; but he would not be able to say of the views of his predecessors in office that they were the views of clumsy and pretentious politicians, though they had confirmed in the most remarkable manner the contentions advanced by the Association. And the fact that stood out prominently from this testimony, expert or otherwise, was that military expenditure was growing at an alarming rate, absorbing fully one half of the whole net revenue of the Government of India. If it was not possible to reduce it by any curtailment in the strength of the army, or any halt in the forward policy, then there was no other remedy for the embarrassment of Indian finance than to urge

England and the English Treasury to be just and equitable in their demands for the cost and equipment of the British troops they supplied, which was what the Government of India themselves had urged in a dispatch, dated February 8, 1879.

In sharp and striking contrast to this alarming growth of expenditure, Pherozeshah went on, the amount spent on Education was just two per cent of the net revenue, which was about equal to the sum swallowed by the Exchange Compensation Allowance.

Sir James might wax sarcastic over "the united wisdom of the native gentlemen interested in politics who met at Christmas at Lahore to show us how we ought to govern India," but the facts and figures which the speaker had adduced spoke for themselves, and they justified his argument that the Financial Statement could not be regarded as satisfactory, and that the Budget was not based on principles of sound finance.

It was in the fitness of things that the splendid work done in the Council by Pherozeshah should receive recognition at the hands of his countrymen. The public appreciated, as it had never done before, what manner of man he was. He was no demagogue delighting the crowd by violence of language or ideas, nor a rhetorician losing himself in mere words, nor too, a professional politician seeking his own advancement. He had the keen eye of a great general who makes the most effective disposition of the forces under his command, and is quick to seize every tactical advantage. He was formidable in attack, and very clever at effecting a retreat from a position which was found to be untenable. Those who crossed swords with him had thus a wholesome respect for him. These outstanding traits, in which he stood unrivalled, had found their full scope on

the floor of the Legislative Council, and his achievements there had evoked an admiration and enthusiasm which were remarkable.

Even that great organ of reactionary opinion, *The Pioneer,* could not withhold a tribute, and in an appreciation of his life and career—enlivened by personal touches about his handsome appearance, his splendid residence and the variety and costliness of his furniture—spoke of him as one of the ablest and most eminent leaders of Western India, and next to Dadabhai Naoroji, the most intellectual man among his set.

The first of the many functions held in Pherozeshah's honour took the shape of an evening party given by his old friend W. C. Bonnerji at his house in Park Street. A few days afterwards, a dinner was held in the Town Hall, at which Mr. Man Mohan Ghosh, another fellow-student at Lincoln's Inn, presided. A much bigger function was held in the same place shortly afterwards, when the citizens of Calcutta gave a public entertainment to mark their appreciation of the services of their distinguished countryman from Bombay.

This series of entertainments constituted a demonstration which was not without political significance. Seldom had Calcutta witnessed such large and representative gathering. In honouring him, Bengal showed that the national spirit was truly at work, bringing about a community of thought and feeling and breaking down the barriers of race and religion. Later, when Pherozeshah was in the midst of his own choice circle of friends at the Ripon Club banquet, he acknowledged with much warmth the hospitality which the people of Calcutta had shown him, and which had made him feel more keenly than ever that he was an Indian of Indians.

On April 1, Pherozeshah returned to Bombay, loaded with honours, and was welcomed at the Byculla station by a large number of friends and admirers. The city had decided to give him a hearty reception and had arranged various entertainments in his honour. Public enthusiasm was intense, and there was a general desire to commemorate his services in a tangible form. Some suggested the erection of a statue; others wanted a more ambitious and useful memorial. All classes of people vied with each other to do honour to one who had come to be regarded as "the uncrowned King of Bombay."

Shortly after his arrival, Pherozeshah was re-elected to the Provincial Council by the Corporation. In view of the fact that his duties as a member of the Supreme Council sometimes took him away from Bombay, there was some talk of bringing forward a new candidate, but there being a strong feeling that he was indispensable, he consented to be proposed for re-election, and was unanimously returned as the representative of the Corporation. It was in the natural course of things, for, as a writer observed, his influence in civic affairs was so predominant that the records of the Corporation for some years might be searched almost, if not quite in vain, for an instance in which any proposition or amendment he had brought forward had not been carried. On one occasion, when the question of the Police charges was under consideration, the Corporation had actually postponed a decision as Pherozeshah happened to be away.

The Ripon Club was appropriately enough the first in Bombay to offer its homage. The head of the Parsi community, the third Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, presided over a large and distinguished company, and paid a handsome tribute to "the force of character, the steady aim, the zeal

industry and fearless eloquence" with which the Bombay Member of the Supreme Legislative Council had always carried on the fight for liberty and progress.

The next scene of triumph was laid in the Novelty Theatre, a hideous structure of corrugated iron sheets which did duty in the old days as the premier play-house of Bombay. There, on April 20, a large and enthusiastic gathering, convened under the auspices of the Bombay Presidency Association, testified to the influence and popularity of one who was by common consent the greatest citizen of Bombay.

The Eighth Provincial Conference held at Belgaum on May 4, 1895 was the next to place on record its appreciation. Pherozeshah attended the Conference and was given a hearty reception at the station as his special saloon steamed in. For weeks Belgaum had been preparing to give a rousing welcome to the man on whom the eyes of all India were centred for the time being. All interest in the proceedings gathered round his personality, and it was a great disappointment to the people when it was known later that indisposition would deprive them of the opportunity of hearing him.

The resolution recording Pherozeshah's "masterly services" was moved by Mr. Gokhale, then unknown to fame, but recognized by those who knew him as a young man of brilliant promise. He quoted a comparison made by a shrewd observer of men and things of the three greatest personalities in the public life of Western India.

That critic had said that Mr. Telang was always lucid and cultured, Mr. Mehta vigorous and brilliant, and Mr. Ranade profound and original. Mr. Gokhale said he agreed with the verdict, but did not think it contained the whole truth. Though some people thought that Mr.

Mehta's particular gifts were vigour of intellect and brilliancy, it did not follow he was in any way deficient in the other qualities. He was to a great extent a happy combination of the independence and strength of character of Mr. Mandlik, the lucidity and culture of Mr. Telang and the originality and wide grasp of Mr. Ranade. This was praise indeed!

It was not until the end of 1895 that the various addresses, voted to Pherozeshah, were presented to him at a public meeting held in the Gaiety Theatre on December 20. It was a remarkable demonstration. Long before the appointed hour, large numbers of people flocked to the theatre; the late arrivals could not even find space to stand. Every inch of ground was occupied and the threatre was filled to suffocation. A large crowd collecetd outside, and gave a rousing welcome to Pherozeshah, who, on entering the hall, was given another ovation.

Rahimtulla Sayani, who was in the chair, called upon Chandavarkar to read the address of the citizens of Bombay. The address voted at the Eighth Provincial Conference was next read by its chairman, Wacha. With a neat little speech, Sayani presented the two addresses enclosed in beautiful silver caskets.

As Pherozeshah rose to reply and looked upon the vast gathering, representative of every community and section, he might well have felt it was a moment to be proud of. Year after year he had risen steadily in the public estimation, and now, while still in the prime of life, he stood before his countrymen with a career and reputation second to none in the whole land. He rose to the occasion, and delivered a speech which was rated among his greatest efforts. It was mostly confined to a slashing reply to the calumnies and misrepresentations of the Indian point of

view with which the enemies of Indian aspirations sought to scotch all attempts at progress and reform. It was at once a vindication of the claims of the educated classes to voice the national aspirations, and a condemnation of the superior critics who were never tired of deriding the aims and methods of the Congress and its leaders.

It was a great speech and swept the vast audience off its feet. Its conclusion was greeted with applause which continued for some minutes.

From amongst a mass of remarkable tributes, Sir William Wedderburn's review of Pherozeshah's career in the columns of *India* arrests particular attention. So also does an observation of *The Indian Spectator,* which wrote approvingly of a suggestion which was on everybody's lips:

"Bombay, we see, has at last fired off her double-barrelled gun at Mr. Mehta's devoted head. And great has been the noise thereof. But is Bombay going to sleep after this explosion? If there is anything in it, she ought to send Mr. Mehta to the House of Commons. That would be the best reward of his labours, and the most profitable investment that Bombay could make of its spare cash.

"We have always felt the need of a speaker and debater of Mr. Mehta's eminence at St. Stephen's, and should be rejoiced to see a practical turn given to the appreciation undoubtedly cherished for him by all classes of the community. A little timely organization would lead to the attainment of this truly national object."

It would be difficult to speculate about Pherozeshah's political career had he entered Parliament, as so many of his friends and followers wished him to do. There was no room, of course, in that most critical assembly in the world, for the mid-Victorian style of oratory which he sometimes affected, but his unrivalled powers of debate and readiness

of speech and argument would certainly have compelled attention.

Gifts such as his would have made their mark anywhere, and it was a thousand pities the Mother of Parliaments never knew the greatest political leader and debater that modern India had produced.

Chapter XVI

RESIGNATION FROM THE COUNCIL

1896

THE strain of work in so many fields told on Pherozeshah at this period, and he kept indifferent health. The robustness of his constitution and the regularity of his habits had enabled him so far to withstand the wear and tear of an exceedingly active political career.

His mode of life, careful at all times, tended to become more and more rigid as time went on. In early years, he was fond of club life, and belonged to the small circle which constituted the somewhat exclusive Excelsior Club. He got tired of it after a time, and decided on starting an institution modelled on up-to-date lines, and with a constitution different from that of other institutions, in that it was not to be merely a coterie of friends, but was to be open to every person of respectability in society. The Ripon Club thus came to be founded in 1885, and at once attracted towards it a large number of men of light and leading in the community.

There, for some years, Pherozeshah spent his evenings, often dining with a few friends and spending a couple of hours in the boisterous game of *chaupat*, the favourite amusement of the high and low in those days. After a time, he dropped out, and the Club saw less and less of him, until the 'Friends in Council' dinners were instituted by his close companion, C. M. Cursetjee, at which members of other communities were often invited and which came to be looked upon as more or less political gatherings

Pherozeshah enjoyed these functions, to which his presence attracted very interesting company.

Towards middle life, however, his habits became sedentary and monotonous and came to be governed by a sort of time-table. He seldom dined out or entertained, or was seen at public gatherings. At the same time, the attention he bestowed on his person and the care he devoted to his health became more and more exacting. To such habits of life may be attributed the good health and mental vigour which he enjoyed so long. Few constitutions, however well preserved, can prove equal, however, to a heavy and continued strain in a tropical climate, and Pherozeshah showed signs of breakdown on his return from Calcutta.

One of the first things he did was to sever his connection with the Imperial Legislative Council, to which he had been re-elected only a couple of months before. On January 26, 1896, he wired his resignation to the Viceroy. Finding himself unable to take any part in the deliberations of the Council, he felt there was no other course open to him but to make room for someone who could actively represent the Presidency, particularly as the Cotton Duties Bill, in which the commercial world of Bombay was keenly interested, and other measures of importance were coming up for discussion.

The resignation caused widespread regret. It was generally felt that the Imperial Council was much the poorer for the loss of a member whose activities had evoked universal admiration. The Indian Press with one voice deplored the circumstance which had compelled his resignation at a moment when his presence was sorely needed.

Though ill-health compelled Pherozeshah to curtail some of his activities, he controlled the currents of public life as well as before, and so far as Bombay was concerned,

there was hardly a movement which did not depend upon his guidance or direction. There were other leaders of undoubted ability and influence, but whenever any difficulty arose, they instinctively felt that his presence and counsel were necessary. The direct and active influence he exercised over public affairs was thus as great, even when directed from the hill-top of Matheran, as when he thundered in the growing unrest in the country.

* * *

The University claimed a considerable share of Pherozeshah's attention in spite of ill-health. He took up a fighting attitude on the question of examination reforms and strongly criticised the Syndicate for declining to embody the recommendations made in that behalf by a committee, and for trying to defy the authority of the Senate. He lent his support to Ranade in the strenuous endeavours made by that eminent scholar and educationist to afford some relief to the harassed student from the crushing burden of examinations. Though rarely coming in contact with the student world, he had a sympathetic understanding of its wants and difficulties; his outlook was not that of a pedagogue or a drill-sergeant.

The attitude of the Government towards the University provided another topic for discussion. It was in the time of Lord Dufferin that the first steps were taken towards the inauguration of a policy of veiled hostility to the cause of higher education, which was regarded as the root cause of the Senate, the Corporation or the Council.

Confidential and semi-confidential circulars were issued to local authorities to curtail the grants to universities and colleges, and gradually to withdraw the State subsidy altogether. This policy had resulted in the steady reduction of the grant to the Bombay University, which had come

down from Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 5,000, and against which the Senate at the instance of Pherozeshah had entered an emphatic protest. The latter had carried the fight into the Council also, and held up the Government to scorn for the niggardly treatment meted out to the University. But these protests had proved unavailing, and the University had now been informed that it could safely be left independent of financial support from provincial revenues, and that no provision had accordingly been made for a grant in the Budget of 1896-97.

On July 27, 1896, the Senate, at the instance of Pherozeshah, supported by Ranade, decided to make a representation to Government urging them to reconsider their decision to withdraw the annual grant. He contended that although the University had established a financial equilibrium, it was still not in a position to carry out certain essential reforms and that in any case the contribution should not have been stopped without giving the University an opportunity to state its case.

He said he knew that the Government had already made up their minds, but the education he had received had taught him that the success of an Englishman lay in the fact that he never knew when he was defeated, and he wished the Senate would not acknowledge defeat likewise. It was a more or less hopeless position, but he hoped the majority of the Fellows would regard the meeting not as one of condolence, but rather as one of doctors in consultation over a patient who was *in extremis,* but not quite dead as yet!

When the Legislative Council met at Poona on August 17, Pherozeshah attacked with much vigour the policy responsible for the cutting down of the Government dole.

* * *

It was in the nineties that the subject of the treatment of Indian settlers in South Africa began to engage the attention of their countrymen in India and the outside world. Beginning with a few occasional acts of hostility, the South African States, British and Boer, soon began to vie with each other in the severity of the disabilities they sought to impose upon the Indian immigrant population, whose nationality they despised, but whose labour they valued. It would be a painful and profitless task to detail the various indignities which were heaped from time to time upon a class of industrious and law-abiding people whose only sin was that they were frugal in their habits. The story of their wrongs forms one of the blackest pages in the history of British Imperialism.

The Indian community in South Africa, alarmed at the growing hostility manifested towards it on all sides, organized itself for defence under the leadership of one of the most extraordinary figures that have ever trod the public stage in this or any other country. M. K. Gandhi, for it was none other than he, deeply moved by the wrongs done to his countrymen, threw away a lucrative practice at the Bar, and consecrated himself to the task of securing for them their just rights as citizens of the British empire. He was subjected to hardships and indignities which would have broken most men. But he was of the stuff of which the truly great are made. On one occasion in the main street of Durban, he was kicked, whipped, stale fish and other things were thrown at him which hurt his eye and cut his ear, and his hat was taken off his head. Through the help of the police he was escorted to the house of an Indian, and when a threatening crowd blockaded the house, he had to be taken away to the police station, dis-

guised as a constable.

Such indignities and risks of personal violence were nothing to a man who could face unflinchingly all the rigours and horrors of prison-life in an inhospitable country which was but partly civilized.

He continued to fight with courage and determination. He memorialised the Colonial Office and the Indian Government from time to time, pointing out the iniquity of the legislative measures which their weakness and indifference had enabled the South African States to impose upon the helpless Indians. He carried on active propaganda work, and appealed to his countrymen in India for their sympathy and support. In August 1895, we find him writing to Pherozeshah from Durban on behalf of the Indian community, appealing for the latter's help in connection with the Immigration Law Amendment Act passed by the Natal Parliament. The letter-head described Gandhi as 'Agent for the esoteric Christian Union and the London Vegetarian Society'!

Later, Gandhi came personally to plead the cause of his fellow-settlers in South Africa, and toured the country, educating Indian public opinion. Among other places, Bombay heard an address from him on September 26, 1896. Pherozeshah presided, and, in introducing the lecturer, praised the great skill, pluck, ability and perseverance shown by the slim young man from Kathiawar, then unknown to fame, but whose mysticism and asceticism were to exercise in later years such a tremendous influence over his countrymen of all classes and creeds. A resolution was passed, authorizing the Chairman to address the Secretary of State for India, soliciting his attention to the hardships and disabilities under which Her Majesty's Indian subjects in South Africa were labouring, as set forth in the various

memorials presented on their behalf, and imploring him to take suitable measures for their redress.

In pursuance of that resolution, Pherozeshah submitted a lengthy representation to the Secretary of State, pointing out the harshness and injustice of the various measures which one State after another had adopted for the purpose of reducing to a position of helotry the settlers whose labour had contributed to the development of the country. The sheer iniquity of the whole thing needed no demonstration. A section at least of British public opinion was conscious of the responsibilities of the Imperial Government in the matter. *The Times,* in a series of powerful articles, championed the cause of the unhappy settlers in a manner which did it credit.

Chapter XVII

VISIT TO ENGLAND

1897-1898

EARLY in the following year, Pherozeshah's health began to grow worse. He had been suffering for some time from an affection of the kidney, which necessitated a somewhat prolonged rest from his labours, and he went accordingly to Matheran.

He allowed himself to be re-elected to the Legislative Council in April, but it was evident that his participation in its deliberations would be of a fitful character. The Corporation, too, saw less and less of that familiar figure in his accustomed place to the right of the Municipal Secretary.

It was not before the pain which he suffered from became somewhat acute that Pherozeshah could be prevailed upon to call in a consultant. With that curious nervous dread which characterized him, he had so far avoided submitting himself to a proper examination. When he at length allowed his trouble to be seen to, it was found that a stone had formed in the bladder, and that an operation would be necessary. As it could not with safety be performed in Bombay, where plague was violently raging, Pherozeshah was advised to proceed to England, which he consented to do after some hesitation.

The operation was successfully performed, and the patient was ordered to take complete rest for a couple of months. He needed it badly, and was not averse to taking it. It was a trying period for one who had such an active mind, but it did him a world of good. When he was able to move about freely towards the middle of August,

the party went straight to Brussels, and thence by slow stages to Lucerne, Lausanne and Geneva. At Lucerne, Dr. Khory, who had all through taken considerable pains over the case, left his patient and returned to Bombay.

Pherozeshah's mode of life during his travels was very much what it was in his own home in Bombay or Matheran. It was characterized by the same luxuriousness and extravagance which he loved to indulge in wherever he went. He travelled with an alarming quantity of luggage, and stayed at the best hotels. He would send for a hair-dresser from the smartest establishment in the place to shave him and do his hair. His fondness for cosmetics, facewashes and powders was well known, and he indulged in these 'feminine' tastes to his heart's content. He affected the most expensive clothes, and was always particular in dressing for dinner even in out-of-the-way places, where tourists love to discard some of the conventions of civilization.

With equal disregard for place and circumstance, Pherozeshah would keep to his usual habits. He would rise late, and spend his morning between breakfast and the performance of his elaborate toilet. He did not care for sight-seeing, and was indifferent to historical associations. He mostly kept his own company, and seldom mixed with the people he met on his travels. His only enjoyment was a long drive before dinner.

His fastidiousness with regard to food was extraordinary, and was persisted in wherever he went. Ordinary drinking water in a strange place he looked on with horror, and he would not touch it even in places noted for the purity of their water supply. He was also particular about his tea and tobacco, which he generally carried with him in a chest, regardless of customs dues and considerations of a like character, which never seemed to trouble him. There

were few things he relished more than a good cigar after dinner, when he retired to the seclusion of his room, and lay in an easy-chair with a pile of papers and some favourite volume near at hand. He always carried his Thackeray and Dickens with him, and a tattered edition of the Bible.

Pherozeshah returned to Bombay on February 12, and was welcomed by his friends at the Ballard Pier. He appeared greatly improved in health. The operation he had undergone had freed him from his complaint, and the complete rest he had enjoyed had restored him to vigour. His return was hailed with joy by the Press and the public. The tragic events of the previous year—the murders of Captain Rand and Lieutenant Ayerst, the deportation of the Natus, the arrest and conviction of Mr. Tilak, and the measures of repression which followed the outbreaks in the Deccan—had caused a general feeling of despair amongst the people and helplessness amongst the leaders. As a commentator put it:

"Divided counsels and protracted discussions, hesitancy and diffidence were the order of the day, and many were the expressions of bitter regret that the one man who alone could have inspired confidence should have been unavoidably absent in England. Bombay without the Honourable Mr. Meha was like the Liberal Party without its Gladstone."

"The parallel is exact. All the difficulties and disadvantages, which this great historical party has experienced by the retirement of its illustrious chief, were felt at every stage in this city owing to the absence of its foremost citizen. The experience was suggestive in the lessons it conveyed not only regarding the present, but about the future. His return is certain to bring back a feeling of confidence and reassurance not only to this city, but also to the whole Presidency."

The Improvement Trust Bill came on for first reading at the meeting of the Legislative Council held at Bombay on February 14, 1898. Lord Sandhurst, who presided, made a graceful reference to the re-appearance of Pherozeshah at the Council table. The bill, in its provisions, was of a most sweeping character. It aimed at creating a new Bombay by means of an agency distinct from the Municipal Corporation which, for various reasons, was regarded as incapable of shouldering the burden. The frightful havoc which the plague had wrought in her midst had laid bare to view the hideous slums of Bombay and the filth and squalor amidst which the majority of her citizens lived and died. It was like a whited sepulchre, and when it was exposed, there was a general feeling of amazement and horror. By the introduction of the Bill, it was sought to create a Trust, armed with wide powers, and financed partly by Government and partly by the Corporation.

On behalf of the Opposition, Pherozeshah gave the measure general approval, though he did not feel himself competent to discuss its provisions in view of the fact that he had returned from Europe only two days before. He did not agree with those who thought it was an attack upon the constitution of the Corporation. Speaking from his intimate acquaintance with the Municipal Act, he was of opinion that it had always been contemplated that special and exceptional occasions might arise when it might be deemed desirable not to entrust the direct work of carrying out certain duties to a body constituted as the Corporation was, but that it might be found necessary to delegate such tasks to an organization composed in a somewhat different way.

The Select Committee on the Bill, mindful of the urgency of the measure lost no time in submitting its report,

and the second reading came on towards the end of March. The debate on the motion was short and uneventful, except for a fine vindication by Pherozeshah of the part which the Bombay Corporation had played in the building up of the city. As the acknowledged leader of that body, and as one who had had a considerable share in the moulding of its Constitution, he would never allow that there was anything wrong with the municipality. In his opinion, the Bill before the Council had raised the curtain on the fourth act of the drama of local self-government in Bombay.

It was not to be, however, a case altogether of mutual congratulations and rejoicings. The non-official members were not going to abdicate their function of criticism, and there were notices of dozens of amendments on the agenda paper, dealing with various matters of detail. Most of these came from Pherozeshah who bore the brunt of the fighting, barring occasional onslaughts on the part of Mr. Goculdas Parekh, the sturdy champion of the peasantry, known as the 'Father of Gujarat', and of Mr. Vijbhucandas Atmaram, a fine type of the refined but orthodox Hindu.

The chief fight was over what were known as the bludgeon clauses, which the serried ranks of the Governments succeeded in retaining substantially as they were. The sturdy advocacy of the leader of the Opposition was able, however, to carry a few amendments, not altogether to be despised. His efforts received the unstinted encomiums of friendly and hostile critics alike. As *The Indian Spectator* wrote, the citizens of Bombay had reason to feel proud of his success in inducing the Government to accept numerous amendments of a substantial character both in the Select Committee and at the second reading, and thus securing for them a much better Bill than was originally framed.

Chapter XVIII

PHEROZESHAH AND GOKHALE

1901

PHEROZESHAH was re-elected to the Imperial Council, but early in 1901 his health again compelled him to resign. In accepting the resignation, he was informed, Lord Curzon greatly regretted to hear of the circumstances which rendered it impossible for the honourable member adequately to perform the duties of attendance in the Imperial Council, where it had always been a pleasure to see him at the table.

The question of succession arose. If there was one man in all India capable of wearing the mantle, it was Gopal Krishna Gokhale, and he sought the aid of Pherozeshah for stepping into the vacancy.

In a letter which he wrote to his leader on January 15, 1901—a human document of considerable interest—he laid bare his hopes and aspirations. He spoke of his impending retirement from the Fergusson College, to which he had dedicated the best years of his youth, and of his intention to devote the rest of his life to political work in India and in England. He felt that unless young men came forward to devote all their time and energies to public work in the spirit in which Dadabhai Naoroji had been working for fifty years, not only was much real progress impossible, but even the ground which had already been gained was in danger of being lost.

His wife's death had destroyed the principal tie which bound him to family life and a settled home, and he could

now carry, without much effort, into the field of politics the devotion with which he had been working for his college. He had built up for himself a small income of about Rs. 125 a month, which, with his monthly pension of Rs. 20 from the College, was enough to keep him in comfort. What he wanted now was a chance of making himself useful to his country. Of course everyone would be sincerely pleased, he added, if Pherozeshah continued to represent Bombay in the Supreme Council as long as health and energy were vouchsafed to him. His great talents and his unique record placed him absolutely beyond the reach of competition. But, it was rumoured, he was shortly going to retire from the Council. On personal grounds, Mr. Gokhale said, he would have wished the resignation to come later:

"I was hoping that you would, even if you did not stand for a fresh election, at any rate complete your present term, which does not expire till the middle of 1902; that during the time I might show some useful work in the Local Council, so that when you retired you might consider me as not quite the least deserving among those who are working for public good in this Presidency at a good, respectful distance behind you.

"Everyone feels—I state what I honestly think—that on the score of gifts, natural and acquired, on the score of prestige, on the score of those numerous qualities which are indispensable in a political leader, there is no equalling you, or even coming near you."

The same could not be said, of course, of the other men who aspired to succeed him, and there being little difference between the qualifications of the various candidates, Gokhale asked for sympathy and encouragement. He was conscious that he was too young for the position, but

the fierce mental anguish which he had had to endure since 1897 (when he had been led to make some allegations in England with regard to the manner in which plague regulations had been enforced in Poona, and had publicly to withdraw the charges and admit their baselessness), had made him older in judgment and experience. In any case, it was not wholly a disadvantage that he would begin the new career at a comparatively early age. He begged to assure Pherozeshah it was no mere personal ambition which was urging him to seek the honour. His reasons were different:

"In 1897, when a perfect storm of fierce criticism broke over my head in connection with my unhappy share in the incidents of that year, nothing wounded me deeper than —'s denunciation of me in the House of Commons as a 'despicable perjurer'. The words burnt into my heart, and the night I read them, I made up my mind to devote my life, as soon as I was free from my pledge, to the furtherance of our political cause in England, to which I had, without meaning it, done such serious injury. And for this work, a brief period of membership of the Viceregal Council will be very useful.

"The painful affair of 1897 will perhaps be brought up against me again and again, but the testimony of Lord Sandhurst himself, and my membership of the Bombay and Supreme Councils, subsequent to that incident, will go a long way towards silencing my critics. The English work is dear to my heart also for the reason that it will please Sir W. Wedderburn, Mr. Hume and Mr. Dadabhai, on whom I was instrumental in bringing humiliation four years ago."

He concluded by saying he had written frankly and without reserve, and he hoped he would not be misunder-

stood. He already owed much to Pherozeshah in public life, and he felt, he might lay bare to the latter the aspirations as well as the wounds of his heart without being repulsed for doing so.

With the support of Pherozeshah and a few other friends, including Mr. (later Sir) T. J. Bennett of *The Times of India,* Gokhale was elected to the vacancy in April. At one time, Mr. Bomanji Petit and Mr. Ibrahim Rahimtulla thought of contesting the seat, but they were persuaded to withdraw, and the election was unanimous.

A happier choice could not have been made. If it was Pherozeshah who introduced a new spirit into the Council Chamber, and taught his countrymen to stand up and speak up like men, it was Gokhale who gave them their first lessons in constructive statesmanship, and paved the way for the enlargement of their rights and liberties. Each was a pioneer in his own way, and together they forged the weapon which in the fulness of time was to win for India the recognition of her right to self-government and equal partnership within the Empire.

* * *

If Pherozeshah expected that the resignation of his seat in the Imperial Council meant a period of comparative ease for him, he was soon to be disillusioned. In the middle of the year, a storm of unprecedented violence broke over the Presidency, and threw it into a state of considerable excitement. From the secluded heights of Mahableshwar, an 'innocent little Bill' was quietly launched into existence, calculated to effect far-reaching changes in the land revenue system of the Presidency. As its real character came to be recognized, an agitation was started such as has not often been seen in this Presidency.

Under the Bombay Land Revenue Code of 1897, land,

when brought under survey settlement, was to be held and occupied 'in perpetuity, conditionally on the payment of the amounts due on account of the land revenue for the same', and the right of occupancy was declared to be heritable and transferable, subject to certain provisions, and could immediately pass to the person whose agreement to become occupant was accepted by the Collector.

Under the guise of protecting the 'ryot' from the clutches of the money-lender, the Bombay Land Revenue Code Amendment Bill sought to do away with this right of alienation and arm the executive with powers to grant land, forfeited to the Crown, on such terms and for such periods as the Collector might prescribe. The authors of the Bill vehemently protested that their only object was to protect the poor ignorant 'ryot' against the rapacity of the *saukar*, and they denounced their opponents as ignorant, ill-informed critics, who had allowed themselves to be made the tools of the money-lending classes.

With equal vehemence, the leaders of the agitation declared that the real object of the measure was to drive in the thin end of the wedge, and to establish State landlordism by degrees. Otherwise, where was the necessity of reducing the 'ryots' to the status of short-term tenants, assuming even that it was desirable to restrict their rights of transfer?

It was thus in an atmosphere surcharged with feeling that the Bombay Legislative Council met at Poona to go through the solemn farce of reading the Bill a second time. The official spokesmen seemed to be in a temper, and the tone and tenor of their speeches were not calculated to contribute towards a dispassionate discussion of the questions at issue. The Member in charge of the Bill started by remarking that Government would have welcomed real criti-

cism, but no reasonable man or body of men could be influenced by speech and writing, which, however vigorous in language, were entirely beside the point. Government expected those who took the part of leaders of public opinion to adhere to the first principles of reasoning. After this pleasant reference to himself and his political associates, what could Pherozeshah do, when he rose to move an amendment, but "seek help and consolation in the reflection that human nature is so constituted, that in a controversy, you are always convinced that your opponents are always wanting in the very elements of reasoning if you do not fall in with their views?"

The amendment sought to put off the evil day by referring the Bill for opinion to various officials, associations and individuals. After nearly a dozen other speakers had addressed the Council, Pherozeshah replied to the debate in a speech which occupied fully an hour. He knew he was fighting a losing battle, but, as he had observed only a day previous during the discussion on the Budget, it was not the first time he was doing so. With considerable emphasis, he once again vindicated his claims to speak on behalf of the ryots as against the omniscient district officer. The amendment was defeated by fourteen votes to nine. Thereupon, as previously arranged, Pherozeshah left the Hall, followed by Bhalchandra Krishna, Goculdas Parekh, Daji Abaji Khare and G. K. Gokhale. The Bill immediately went through the second and the third reading, and was passed into law.

A storm of indignation broke in certain quarters over the heads of Pherozeshah and his loyal colleagues, who, at his bidding, had walked out of the Hall and declined to take any part in the solemn farce of going through the Bill stage by stage. Never had such an affront been offered, and

Anglo-India and officialdom were furious. Their venom was mostly directed against Pherozeshah. It was he who had dictated this novel method of protest.

Chapter XIX

PHEROZESHAH AND THE CONGRESS

1902—1904

THE dull days which followed were in the nature of a reaction from the passion and bitterness evoked by the controversy over the Land Revenue Bill. In September 1902, however, local politics were enlivened by a little storm in a tea-cup, which arose through a movement to honour Lord Kitchener.

'The hero of Omdurman' was coming out to India as Commander-in-Chief, fresh from his triumphs on the blood-stained veldts of South Africa. The veteran editor of the *Rast-Goftar,* Mr. Kabraji felt that the first Municipality in India ought not to let the occasion pass by without honouring the most distinguished soldier in the Empire. He brought up, accordingly, a proposal in the Corporation for presenting an address of welcome to Lord Kitchener on his arrival in Bombay.

A stickler for principles and precedents, Pherozeshah opposed the motion, though he keenly appreciated Lord Kitchener's great qualities as a soldier. He pointed out that the custom of the Corporation was to honour only the representatives of the King, the members of the royal family and such individuals as had rendered distinguished services to the City.

Pherozeshah went on to say that the Corporation had never been known to present addresses of welcome to Commanders-in-Chief of India. Had there been such a precedent, it would certainly have accorded such honour, on

the eve of departure, to Lord Napier of Magdalla, one of the most gallant officers of the British army, and to Lord Roberts, another general of distinction, who were both universally liked and respected. These arguments weighed with the Corporation, and the voting resulted in Mr. Kabraji's motion being defeated by a large majority.

The Corporation and the public, whom it represented, could scarcely be expected to enthuse over the victories of Kitchener which, whatever their value to other parts of the Empire, meant nothing at all to a country, which was made to realise in a hundred different ways that, in spite of all the fatuous flapdoodle about its being 'the brightest jewel in the British Crown', it had really no recognised place in the Imperial federation.

* * *

The Congress was to hold its annual session in Madras during the Christmas of 1903, and from many quarters Pherozeshah received urgent requests to attend it. He had not yet favoured the Southern Presidency with his presence and guidance though repeatedly urged to do so.

Among those who appealed to him was Mr. Viraraghavachari, one of the most prominent Congressmen in the province, who strongly urged on Pherozeshah the importance of his presence. The Madras leader pointed out that the movement was slowly drifting without proper guidance. Things were not moving in the right direction ever since the absence of the Father of the Congress, 'whose word was law and whose expostulations, scolding and even bullying were accepted as a privilege by the recipients'. Young men were getting restive and chafing at the bit. All sorts of wild proposals were being made, and the air was thick with the signs of the storm that was gathering. The Congress was loudly crying for its old and trusted leaders.

Pherozeshah obeyed the call and went. Lal Mohan Ghosh, who, after a brilliant public career, had lived for some years in retirement, had been brought out from his political seclusion and elected President. His speech from the chair was in print a few days before the session was to be held, but somehow Pherozeshah did not receive a copy for some time. He had been told that the President-elect had, in his address, mildly chastised some of the older leaders, notably Pherozeshah himself, for their autocratic exercise of authority over the Congress. Ghosh, it was believed, had warned the young men, who aspired to be leaders, against factions and cliques and had urged them to be specially careful that their own acts might not be condemned as autocratic by the rank and file of the party. They should take care, that it might not be said of any of them what Gibbon had said of one of the Roman Tribunes, that 'he spoke the language of patriots and trod in the footsteps of despots'.

When the speech was at length placed in the hands of Pherozeshah, he decided upon taking the wind out of the sails of the President-elect, and took charge of the proposition for electing him to the chair. After paying a tribute to the great abilities of Mr. Ghosh, Pherozeshah went on to suggest that he had become a political *yogi* after his electioneering campaigns in England and had possibly formed ideas which were remote from the realities of the situation:

"For example, Brother Delegates, he may imagine that I, a mild Parsee, belonging to a mild race, may be charged with being a despot. Why, gentlemen, he might apply to me the words from one of the great historians, that I talked the language of patriots but trod in the footsteps of despots. Can there be a greater calumny on a mild Parsee than

that? Then, gentlemen, he might again imagine, not coming in actual contact with us, but reading only newspapers, that there are terrible factions and cliques in the Congress. I will venture to tell him, now that he has come out of his political *yogism,* that we have our little differences—we always had them and shall have them, I hope, but factions and cliques founded on personal objects and selfish aims have been totally unknown to us."

The humour of the situation, created by this unexpected move, was much appreciated by the audience, which had copies of Mr. Ghosh's speech already in its hands. But the unfortunate President was greatly taken aback, and not unnaturally, did not like his being outwitted in such a fashion. He took it in good spirit, however, and when at the commencement of his address, he referred to Pherozeshah's observations, he merely remarked that if he was suffering from any delusion, he had the consolation of knowing that his delusions were shared by some of the leading Indian newspapers in Calcutta and Madras.

The incident was widely commented on. The low murmurs which were so often heard against the almost despotic sway exercised by Pherozeshah over the Congress, had at length found definite expression in a presidential address. How far the pointed rebuke administered by Lal Mohan Ghosh was calculated to affect the position of the dictator, it is difficult to tell. The situation was so adroitly handled by Pherozeshah, and the tables were so neatly turned that the anger of his opponents was dissolved in laughter. Critics, whether hostile or friendly, seemed to enjoy the clever move, and to realize more clearly than ever that as a debater and tactician there was none to approach the Bombay leader.

Though identified with the Congress from its very in-

ception, and though he had rapidly attained a position of almost absolute authority, Pherozeshah did not maintain a close and personal touch with the movement. In spite of the entreaties of his friends and followers, who year after year urged him to attend and lead the Congress, he kept away from more than one session. He was never such a familiar figure to Congressmen all over the country as were, for instance, Surendranath Bannerji, Madan Mohan Malaviya or Dinshaw Wacha.

For all that, he exercised a dominating influence over the national movement. Leaders in other provinces took their cue from him on most questions of importance, and the influential Bombay section was always amenable to his control, and loyally supported the views and the general lines of his policy.

If Pherozeshah's authority was respected even from a distance, it is easy to understand that whenever the Congress was held in Bombay, his influence was absolutely supreme. He invariably became Chairman of the Reception Committee, and overshadowed everybody, including the President. It was this personal ascendancy which materially contributed to the success of the Bombay session of 1904, and stemmed the tide of extremism which arose at Benares in the following year, gathered strength at Calcutta and finally submerged the Congress at Surat. His masterful direction of affairs ensured its smooth working, and his association with the Reception Committee as its spokesman lent weight and dignity to the session. His speech of welcome to the delegates struck a note of robust optimism, calculated to drive away counsels of despair. Starting with a vindication of the necessity of holding the annual session, he laid before the audience 'the confession of faith of a devout and irreclaimable Congressman':

"I am an inveterate, I am a robust optimist like Mahadeo Govind Ranade. I believe in divine guidance through human agency. It may be the fatalism of the East, but it is an active not a passive fatalism, a fatalism which recognizes that the human wheels of the machinery must actively work to fulfil their appointed task. My humility saves me from the despair that seizes more impatient souls like those who have recently preached a gospel of despondency—I always seek hope and consolation in the words of the poet: 'I have not made the world, and He that has made it will guide'."

Proceeding, Pherozeshah dealt at some length with the achievements of the Congress. It was an honourable record which left no room for disappointment or despair. Apart, however, from any material achievements, the greatest triumph of the Congress lay in the awakening of the soul of the nation, and the forces it had let loose, which were clamouring for expression in so many fields of human activity.

The official report of the Bombay Congress of 1904, issued by the committee, speaks in grateful and eloquent terms of Pherozeshah's share in the success of the session. We are told that when other provinces were hesitating about inviting the Congress, Pherozeshah boldly stepped forward, and, with a sublime confidence in his city and his Presidency, offered to arrange its being held in Bombay.

His towering personality, great powers of organization, undisputed position as a leader and wonderful tact made everyone proud to work under such a chief, and made the gathering the notable success it proved to be. After such encomiums, it is hardly surprising that a friendly critic felt constrained to observe that, though there was a good deal of truth in all this, he imagined Pherozeshah would have pre-

ferred to remain a little nearer the level of average mortals!

It was at this Congress of 1904 that a mild revolt against Pherozeshah's authority broke out. During a heated discussion in the Subjects Committee, one of the Punjab delegates—Lala Murlidhar, according to most accounts—complained bitterly about Pherozeshah bearing down all opposition and carrying everything his own way. Pherozeshah got up and answered at length the charge flung at him, and ended by innocently asking the delegates why they did not press their views upon the committee, and carry it with them. "But your personality carries everything before it", said Lala Murlidhar. "I can't help my personality, gentlemen, can I?", quickly retorted Pherozeshah, and this prompt and happy rejoinder at once silenced his critics, and averted what might have proved an acrimonious discussion.

While the rebellious section remained sullen, the impression left on the minds of the majority of delegates was one of wholehearted appreciation of the great gifts which had given Pherozeshah the position of unchallenged supremacy which was so bitterly resented in certain quarters. Mr. Natesan, the enterprising publisher of Madras and a staunch Congressman, gave expression to the general sentiment in a letter he wrote to Pherozeshah on his return home:

"I can never forget the two happy evenings I passed at your house. I and my friends left Bombay with the regret that we were not privileged to stay there longer, and be benefited by your inspiring personality—despite Lala Murlidhar's complaint about it. It is only after we saw you and watched you with reverence and affection that we realized the force of personality and leadership. In a leading article on 'Japan—its message to India', which I have

written for the *Indian Review*, I have referred to you as 'the born and chosen leader of the Indian people.' This is what we all felt you to be."

Chapter XX

UNIVERSITY REFORM

1902-1903

ONE of the most notable events of Lord Curzon's Viceroyalty was the controversy which raged over the question of University reform, on which he had set his heart from a very early date of his assumption of office. The memorable Despatch of 1854 had given India an educational system that had unchained forces which had slumbered for ages. With occasional aberrations, the policy laid down there had been steadily pursued, and had created the new India of which one saw so many signs on every hand.

With the growth of unrest resulting from the upheaval in men's minds, brought about by the influx of new ideas, a feeling had grown, however, that the system of education in India was at the root of the disease in the body politic. Some believed it was ungodly; others, that it was too exclusively literary; and it became the fashion to think that 'a literature which contained invaluable lessons for life and character, and a science which was founded upon the reverent contemplation of Nature and her truths', had left no permanent impression upon the moral and intellectual fibre of the thousands of young men who had been fed and nurtured on them.

The first step in the direction of reform was taken with the calling together of a Conference at Simla to consider the system of education in India. Every member of the Conference, barring Dr. Miller of the Madras Christian

College, was a Government officer, and not a single Indian was appointed to that body. As even a warm admirer like Mr. Lovat Fraser has admitted, "Lord Curzon had said in Calcutta that he wanted to ascertain the trend of authoritative opinion; what he heard was the trend of official opinion."

The Conference was followed by the appointment of a Commission in January 1902 to consider the problem in all its bearings, and to suggest ways and means for placing the system of higher education on a sound and enduring basis. Mr. (later Sir) Thomas Raleigh was appointed chairman.

The Commission made a somewhat hurried tour of the country, and was ready with its recommendations in June 1902. When its report was published, its reactionary character raised a storm of protest in all parts of the country. It was felt that an attempt was being made, not at the reform of existing institutions, but at their wholesale destruction, and that a system was proposed to be substituted, which was calculated to do away with the popular basis of education.

The report with the observations of the Government of India was sent to local governments, and in due course came before the University of Bombay, which appointed a committee to deal with it. The latter, under the guidance, chiefly of Pherozeshah, subjected the recommendations of the Commission to a searching examination, and drew up a report which completely knocked them on the head.

The report was adopted by the Senate of the University. In getting the committee and the Fellows to accept it, Pherozeshah may be regarded as having scored a distinct personal success. Gokhale, who saw an advance copy of the report, wrote to Pherozeshah from Calcutta, paying a notable tribute of admiration:

"That you should have got the European members of the Committee to join in all your criticisms and proposals, except one, is a remarkable triumph for us all, and everybody must recognize that it has been achieved mainly owing to your great tact and influence and your powerful personality. It is felt here that if the Bombay Senate should adopt this report—as most probably will now be the case—the opposition to the Commission's recommendations will be enormously strengthened. They have no hope here of getting their own Senate to condemn the report as ours has done, or rather will shortly do, and the difference in calibre and political grit between their leaders and ours is, therefore, at present being freely recognized here.

"You know how emotional these people are, and how easily swayed. The very men who, after the Congress of 1901, were violent in their denunciations of your and Mr. Bannerji's high-handedness in extinguishing Nundy's Indian Congress Committee, are now praising you to the skies, and recognize in you—very justly—the greatest political leader in India of our time."

After months of heated discussion of the recommendations of the Commission all over the country, the Universities Bill, which was largely based on them was introduced in the Legislative Council on November 2, 1903.

The Senate of the Bombay University appointed a committee to consider the Bill. It lost no time in submitting its report, which came up for discussion on December 21. In moving its adoption, Pherozeshah delivered another heavy indictment against the changes proposed to be introduced.

'The Englishmen', Pherozeshah said, had frankly admitted some months before that one of the main objects of the proposed reforms was that the direction of Univer-

sity education should thenceforward be 'under European control', and that the Universities should therefore be 'under the domination of the Government through such a new constitution as may be established by legislation. That was the real drift and purpose of the Bill taken as a whole, and most of the other features occupied a subordinate place and were of doubtful utility. What was certain was that a clean sweep had been made of the integrity and independence of the Senate, which had been such valuable factors of healthy growth in the past. Was that a consummation, Pherozeshah asked in conclusion, to which the Fellows of the Senate would give their approval, or would they not rather resist it to the utmost of their power, however little it might be?

The speech was loudly cheered, and contributed not a little to the practically unanimous adoption of the Senate report.

The Universities Bill survived the hammer strokes of Pherozeshah and the rapier-thrusts of Mr. Gokhale, who condemned the measure in a masterly speech in the Imperial Legislative Council. Under democratic forms of government, the arguments of these two men would have sealed the fate of the Bill; or, it may be, the measure might have passed into law, shorn of its most objectionable features. But it is one of the inevitable consequences of systems of administration which are autocratic in character that important questions of policy have to be decided without any real assistance or guidance on the part of leaders of thought in the country. Criticism is not very helpful and tends to be merely destructive when the critic feels he has no hand in the shaping of the measures he discusses, and that the only useful thing he can do is to attack the weakest points and the most objectionable features.

Chapter XXI

OFFICIAL RECOGNITION

1904-1905

HONOURS lists in India, as in other countries, are seldom marked by any originality or distinctive features; with monotonous regularity, decorations descend upon certain well-defined types of people whose only merit very often is a faithful discharge of their duties towards the State as conceived by those in authority.

Now and then, a bold attempt is made to go outside the magic circle of mediocrity, servility and officialdom in which the honours' list revolves, and a grateful public, prone to attach exaggerated importance to a prefix or a suffix, rejoices that merit has at length been 'rewarded'.

Such was the case when the Birthday Honours list of 1904 announced the conferment on Pherozeshah of the dignity of a K.C.I.E. It must be accounted to the credit of Lord Curzon that he did not hesitate to recommend for distinction his most formidable opponent and that he did not allow differences of opinion to obscure his appreciation of Pherozeshah's eminence as a leader. The event caused widespread satisfaction. All shades of opinion united in recognizing that the honour could not have been better bestowed. "Even the ranks of Tuscany could scarce forbear to cheer."

Telegrams and letters of congratulations from individuals and public bodies poured in from all over India. The Ripon Club gave him a public banquet, where Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy (the fourth of the name) presided, and spoke of

him as 'First among the Indian Bar; First among Indian Councillors; and the First in the hearts of his countrymen' —a somewhat quaint adaptation of the famous tribute paid to the greatest of America's sons. The students and 'old boys' of the Elphinstone College gave him an entertainment, at which they presented him with a massive silver centre-piece that he treasured among his proudest possessions.

On July 14, a special meeting of the Bombay Municipal Corporation was held in response to a requisition signed by 64 members for the purpose of passing a resolution congratulating their leader on the honour conferred upon him.

The Corporation felt that the event required signalising in a still more marked fashion, and the meeting was followed by a banquet a few days later. It gave an opportunity to Pherozeshah of paying a tribute to the men, official as well as non-official, who had made local self-government in Bombay what it was.

Passing on to another theme, Pherozeshah spoke at some length on what had often been said as to his leadership. In connection with that, he said he wanted to make the confession that instead of leading he rather followed the Corporation. The idea tickled his hearers, and the remark was greeted with loud laughter. But Pherozeshah gravely went on to explain the phenomenon. The fact was this: he watched the trend of opinion of his colleagues on any given question; he tried to give out his own views with the object of evoking other views, and by these means he found out on which side the correct opinion lay. That had been his invariable practice for years, and he found from experience that the Corporation in almost all cases took a sound common-sense view of matters, and because he was able to fall in with that common-sense view, he was curiously said to be leading the Corporation!

As a dialectical exercise, this piece of reasoning was certainly entertaining, though not expected to carry conviction to a public to whom Pherozeshah and the Corporation were synonymous terms. The real explanation of his leadership—and it was one which those who three years later attempted his overthrow overlooked, and which could not obviously have come from his own lips—lay in the fact that he was almost invariably in the right and that it was impossible not to be convinced by his arguments, fortified as they were by a shrewd judgment and vast knowledge and experience of public affairs.

* * *

There had not been wanting uncharitable critics who had whispered that the K.C.I.E. was a sop thrown to a formidable enemy, which might result in moderating the vehemence of his opposition and the strength of his attacks. They were soon to find out that they did not really know the man. Not many months after, the very Viceroy who had so generously appreciated his merits received from Pherozeshah a severe castigation on the occasion of his return to India to re-assume the reins of government when a section of the Corporation proposed to honour him with an address of welcome. It at once called forth a strong but unavailing protest from Pherozeshah.

The proposition was moved by Mr. Hormusji Chothia, a well-known solicitor and an energetic member of the Corporation, and seconded by Colonel Dimmock. Pherozeshah felt it to be an imperative duty to oppose it. He observed with regret that most of the important measures of Lord Curzon's administration had not been in conformity with his declarations and assurances.

In the end, Pherozeshah showed himself willing to meet the mover of the proposition half-way, and to agree

to a formal address of welcome to Lord Curzon as Viceroy and representative of the Sovereign, but not as Governor-General and Head of the Administration. Mr. Chothia having declined the compromise, Pherozeshah moved an amendment embodying his suggestion, which was thrown out by 27 votes against 26.

It was a rare experience for Pherozeshah. For once, the body which used loyally to register his decrees, failed him, the significance of it was not lost on the public or himself. Slowly the forces were rising, which three years later culminated in the infamous Caucus which convulsed all Bombay and brought shame and humiliation on her civic life.

* * *

The strenuous, masterful and epoch-making regime of Lord Curzon was drawing to a close amidst a bitterness and resentment which were in painful contrast to the record of his earlier years. Measure after measure calculated to excite disaffection and alarm had emanated from the restless brain of the Viceroy, intent on doing his duty, and heedless of the currents of national life and thought.

In the result, a tremendous wave of unrest swept over the country, and sedition and anarchism began to rear their ugly heads. It was in such an atmosphere, charged with elements dangerous to the safety of the State, that the Prince of Wales, later to become King George V, came out to India to give the watchword of sympathy to those who were administering his father's vast dominions with a despotism, popularly known as 'benevolent', which, consequently, they had come to look upon as a virtue.

Bombay, as the Gateway of India, bestirred itself early to give a reception befitting the historic occasion. Considering that the President of the Corporation would have a prominent part to play in the functions which were to be

held in honour of the royal visit, it was a matter of some importance to select a man who would lend distinction to the position. Many ambitious men cherished a desire to strut on the stage at this juncture, and an exciting contest might have been witnessed had not the Corporation instinctively turned to the one man on whom it fell back whenever a difficult situation arose.

The election was made in April 1905, with a cordiality and unanimity, and received by the public with an enthusiasm, which were a striking testimony to the position which Pherozeshah occupied in the public life of Bombay. The speeches, made on the occasion, drew from Pherozeshah the remark that he could scarcely recognize himself in the extremely ideal picture which had been drawn of him.

The strength of character and independence of spirit, which were among the leading characteristics of the new President, were unexpectedly called into requisition a few months later. The Municipal Secretary, at his desire, had written to Government and invited their attention to the notification issued in connection with the visit to Bombay in 1875 of the then Prince of Wales, in which the Chairman of the Corporation had been given a prominent place in the reception of His Royal Highness on the steps of Apollo Bunder. The Secretary expressed a hope that the same arrangements would be observed on the present occasion. No notice seems to have been taken of this communication, which was followed by a press note which showed that the President, the Commissioner and the Sheriff of Bombay were not included among those who were to receive Their Royal Highnesses on their landing at the Bunder.

The announcement was received with surprise and

indignation. The Corporation felt that a deliberate slight had been offered to it, and, through it, to the City, and an informal meeting was held, at which it was resolved to address the Government and convey to them the feelings which their action had evoked. Something in the nature of a sensation had been created, and speculation was rife as to the outcome of the negotiations between the two bodies. What would the Corporation do if the Secretariat remained obdurate? There were all sorts of rumours in the town. That the Corporation was determined to settle the question of its rights and privileges once for all was apparent to all who watched its temper. Some members were prepared to go the length of moving an adjournment of the 'meeting' at the Bunder, at which the address was to be presented. Imagine such a thing taking place at the very moment of the royal landing!

The authorities were alarmed, and the blundering official responsible for the arrangements received a peremptory mandate to see the President and settle the matter with him. An informal meeting of the Corporation had been called to consider the situation on November 8, a day previous to the arrival of the august visitors, and no time was to be lost. At 2 in the afternoon, Mr. Edgerley, Chief Secretary to the Government, drove down to Pherozeshah's place at Napean Sea Road and had a long interview with him, at which he was plainly given to understand the consequences of disregarding the wishes of the Corporation. Mr. Edgerley promised to convey the message at once to the Governor, and it was arranged that before the hour of the meeting either 'Aye' or 'No' was to be communicated to the President.

A little before the appointed time, the fateful message arrived over the telephone at the Municipal Secretary's

office, announcing the capitulation of Government. Pherozeshah received from Mr. Edgerley a wire at almost the same time with the cryptic message 'Yes'.

An atmosphere of suppressed excitement pervaded the meeting on the 8th when the members gathered to discuss the situation. In a tactful little speech, the President explained that he had been assured that a misunderstanding had arisen, and that no slight had been intended to be offered. The idea had been to work up the occasion in such a way that the welcome of the Corporation was to be the crown in the whole affair. Upon matters being explained to them, the Government had shown themselves willing to accede to the wishes of the Corporation. The President added he accepted the explanation readily, and recognized the cordial spirit in which the matter had been settled. This tactful utterance soothed the audience, and silenced the angry criticisms which were too ready to burst forth.

Chapter XXII

THE CAUCUS

1906-1907

SOME time later, there emerged a movement, destined to convulse all Bombay and threaten for a time seriously to impair that harmony between the different sections of her population which has always been such a distinguishing characteristic of her public life.

The father and promoter of this discreditable movement was Mr. Harrison, then Accountant-General to the Government of Bombay. Having conceived the idea of ridding the City of Pherozeshah's domination, he set about looking for allies, and found three men to help him, who by the position they occupied, were capable of exercising a powerful influence on the course of events. First and foremost among them stood Mr. Lovat Fraser, of *The Times of India*, a journalist who wielded a formidable pen and controlled a powerful newspaper. The others were Mr. Hatch, Collector of Bombay, and Mr. Gell, Commissioner of Police, whose official positions enabled them to dominate the Justices of the Peace who were to be the instruments of the tortuous designs of the organizers of the movement. With the assistance of these men, Mr. Harrison began a series of manoeuvres without a parallel in the history of municipal elections in this, or, perhaps, in any other country in the world.

The general elections to the Corporation were to come off in February 1907. Pherozeshah was a candidate as usual for one of the sixteen seats allotted to the Justices

of the Peace. There were only about six hundred of the latter, and as a large number of them owed the 'distinction' to the favour of some official or other, it was not a difficult task to manipulate the electorate. Hitherto, however, the Justices had exercised the franchise fairly judiciously and had invariably paid Pherozeshah the compliment of returning him to the Corporation on his bare intimation that he was seeking their suffrage.

One of the first things the organizers of what came to be known as the 'Caucus' did was to issue a 'ticket', containing the names of sixteen nominees of their choice, selected from the different communities and pledged to break down the one-man-rule in the Corporation. Some of these precious candidates—'Independents' as they were dubbed with unconscious humour by the chief showman—were unwilling to achieve the fame which was sought to be thrust on them; but they were somehow swept into the net and held up to the admiring gaze of the world as men of light and leading, who would regard all municipal questions on their merits and vote according to their conscience!

Having formed his 'ticket', Mr. Harrison backed by his allies commenced operations on a large scale. Beginning with his own subordinates, he tackled successively the various departments of the Secretariat, the Railways, the Indian Medical Service, the Collectors of Customs and of Land Revenue and other officials holding important positions under Government. Pressure and persuasion were freely employed to get all Justices, who hung on their favours or feared their frowns, to vote solidly for the 'ticket'.

The appointed day, February 22, came at last, a day memorable in the civic annals of Bombay. The public had been admitted to the Hall, and the election took place

amidst scenes of wild excitement. Mr. Shepherd, the Municipal Commissioner, was elected chairman of the 'meeting' on the motion of Pherozeshah, who little realized the part Mr. Shepherd was playing behind the scenes. Just before the appointed hour, a large number of European Justices trooped into the Hall with their voting papers, containing the names of Caucus candidates, already signed, in their pockets.

The organizers of the movement had left nothing to chance. They did not want their voters to be worried, and thanks to the assistance they received from the Municipal Commissioner and from their legal advisers who were always at hand, they had arranged that their stalwart supporters should not be troubled to do anything more than just step into the Hall and hand over the voting papers. As soon, therefore, as the ballot box was opened, in went scores of papers supporting the 'ticket'.

At the appointed hour, Mr. Shepherd declared the meeting closed. At this time, Mr. Fraser was observed to be standing close by the chairman, whereupon some one from the crowd called out 'Times of India'. At this a tremendous hiss went up. Mr. Fraser, however, faced the audience with complete self-assurance and, before leaving the Hall, shook hands with Pherozeshah and wished him success!

The 'uncrowned King of Bombay' followed soon after amidst deafening cheers from the crowd, which threw flowers and bouquets at him and garlanded him profusely. People began running after his carriage, shouting 'We don't want a Corporation without Sir Pherozeshah', 'Sir Pherozeshah means the Corporation and the Corporation means Pherozeshah', 'One Pherozeshah is worth a thousand Harrisons', and delivering themselves of such other obser-

vations as only a crowd can think of.

The result of the voting showed that the Caucus had triumphed all along the line. All its nominees except one got in, and the only outsider who found a place was Sir Dinshaw Petit who had had the independence to refuse to have anything to do with so disgraceful a movement. He, too, would have failed but for an objection as regards a single vote raised against one of the candidates belonging to the Harrison gang. Pherozeshah stood seventeenth on the list, with 231 votes to his credit.

The result was received with pain and indignation throughout the country. Newspapers and publicists of all shades of opinion gave expression to their feelings of resentment at the tactics which had succeeded in overthrowing the one man who had made the Bombay Corporation what it was, a model, despite all its faults, of local self-government in India.

If the Harrison-Fraser clique imagined that it had dealt an irreparable blow to the prestige of the dictator, a rude awakening awaited it. He was never more popular than in the hour of his defeat. Conservatives who distrusted and disliked him, nationalists who had grown to fear and hate him, alike poured out their sympathy and admiration. A movement was started to raise a statue to him, and a large sum was subscribed, but as on previous occasions the idea had to be abandoned out of deference to Pherozeshah's wishes.

The defeat of Pherozeshah at the poll was temporary. One of the Caucus candidates, Mr. Suleman Abdul Wahed, by reason of his having contracts with the municipality, was disqualified, and Pherozeshah as next on the list stepped into the place. Room had also in the meantime been made for him by Mr. Dikshit, one of his devoted lieutenants in

the Corporation and the Council who, out of a touching loyalty to his chief, had promptly refused to accept the seat in the Girgaum Ward to which he had been elected. This had provided an avenue through which Pherozeshah had walked in. When Mr. Wahed's election was invalidated, however, Pherozeshah resigned from the Girgaum Ward and enabled Mr. Dikshit to rejoin the Corporation from which, with rare self-abnegation, he had chosen to retire.

Nevertheless, public excitement over the issue continued at fever heat. It culminated in a great demonstration which took place at Madhav Baug on the afternoon of April 7. A mass meeting of the citizens of Bombay was called to give expression to the universal feeling of condemnation of the unconstitutional action of Government officials in interfering with the purity and freedom of the election and to adopt a memorial to the Viceroy, praying for an inquiry into the affair. Long before the appointed hour, thousands of people of all communities flocked to the place and filled every inch of space in the quadrangle and the halls. When the chairman, Mr. Gokhale, who had come down from Calcutta to attend the meeting, arrived, it was with great difficulty that he could make his way to the platform through the seething mass of humanity which surrounded the place. He received a rousing ovation.

A passage from Mr. Gokhale's speech may be usefully quoted as it bears on the oft-repeated charge about the autocracy of Pherozeshah:

"A man with the great transcendental abilities of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, placing those abilities freely and unreservedly at the disposal of his city for nearly forty years, is bound to attain a position of unrivalled predominance in any Corporation and in any country. That such a man

should tower head and shoulders above his fellowmen after such a record is only to be expected, and those who complain of this quarrel with the very elements of our human nature. Such predominance implies deep gratitude on the part of those to whose service a great career has been consecrated, joined to that profound confidence in the wisdom and judgment of the leader, which goes with such gratitude.

"Sir Pherozeshah's position in the Bombay Corporation is no doubt without a parallel in India, but there is a close parallel to it in the mighty influence exercised by Mr. Chamberlain at Birmingham, and is not dissimilar to the position occupied by Lord Palmerston for many years in Whig England, and later by the great Gladstone in the councils of the Liberal Party."

The reply which the Government of India gave to the memorial adopted at the meeting was a curious piece of reasoning. They stated that as the matter had been fully investigated by the Courts, which had held that the officers who took part in the election had made no illegal use of their influence, the Government of India had no orders to pass in connection with the prayers of the memorialists.

With the holding of the meeting, however, public excitement began to subside, and Bombay prepared to settle down and resume the even tenor of her existence.

The first meeting of the newly-constituted Corporation, to the disappointment of a public eager for sensations, passed off smoothly and uneventfully. The valiant knights of the Caucus, who were to reform the municipal administration and purge it of the taint which had so long affected it, were found to be very mild and harmless people. They certainly did not 'stagger humanity' with their achievements. The dictator still remained master of the situation for all practical purposes. The ranks of his supporters

had been thinned; his opponents had gained in numerical strength; but the Corporation continued to be dominated by his presence and led by his powerful intellect. The Caucus had triumphed: the Caucus had failed.

Chapter XXIII

THE SURAT CONGRESS AND AFTER

1907

THE tiny mite which saw the light of day in Bombay in 1885, after a period of healthy childhood, had now reached years of discretion. Year after year, the Congress had grown in strength and numbers, and had voiced the national aspirations with courage and faithfulness. Its annual gatherings brought together men of light and leaders from every province—the intelligentsia of the nation—and focussed public opinion on the many problems of Indian administration.

Like all non-official parliaments of the people, it arangued and declaimed, and passed an alarming number of resolutions with unfailing regularity. In spite, however, of a little oratorical exuberance and a fondness for spectacular effect, the Congress served a distinct purpose and held a well-defined place in the political life of the country. It crystallised public opinion, which was finding expression through numerous channels, and it roused the enthusiasm necessary for national progress as no other organization could hope to do.

During all these years of its growth to manhood, the Congress had trodden the path of constitutional agitation. The faith of its leaders was large in Time, and through obloquy, ridicule and disappointments, they kept up a stout heart. Theirs was a voice crying in the wilderness, but they believed in their mission and recognized that progress must be slow and that the ground must be fought inch by inch. They were content to work for the generations to come.

Towards the end of the century came the Curzonian

regime with its fetish of a soulless efficiency.

As the masterful Viceroy began to encounter opposition in his headlong career, his spirit became more and more intolerant, and he devised measure after measure to beat back the rising tide of nationalism. The culminating act of this restless one-man rule was reached in the ill-starred Partition of Bengal, 'the biggest blunder since the Battle of Plassey'.

A measure professed to be in interests of efficient administration, the Bengali people regarded it as striking at the root of their growing solidarity of feeling and as calculated to overthrow the political influence of the Bengali speaking race. Never was there such an agitation as followed this hapless product of a misguided policy. It grew in strength and volume and developed in a hundred different directions until Royal sympathy and British statesmanship came to the rescue, and the 'settled fact' was unsettled.

Side by side with the ferment produced by the events of an epoch-making Viceroyalty, there was a deep feeling of discontent among the more ardent spirits in the national movement, engendered by what they regarded as the utter futility of political agitation along the lines hitherto pursued.

Year after year the cry of the Congress went unheeded, its ponderous resolutions were contemptuously looked upon as the demands of noisy agitators or impatient idealists. The new Party would, therefore, have nothing to do with the 'policy of mendicancy' of the Congress and its veteran leaders. The Deccan and Bengal were the two principal centres of the new gospel that was preached from the Press and platform by an ever-increasing band of youthful and aggressive politicians under the inspiration of men like Messrs. Bepin Chandra Pal, Aurobindo Ghosh, and that

stormy petrel of Indian politics, Bal Gangadhar Tilak.

The first manifestations of the new spirit, so far as it affected the national movement embodied in the Congress, were evidenced at Benares in 1905, when Mr. Gokhale was in the chair. Anticipating trouble, he had wired to Chimanlal Setalvad, insisting upon Pherozeshah's presence at the session, as, without him there was a real danger of the Congress being committed to wild and impossible positions. Mr. Gokhale felt convinced that the proceedings would end harmoniously, and Pherozeshah's lead followed by an overwhelming majority if he was personally present. No serious injury was done to the Congress cause, however, in spite of Pherozeshah keeping away though it was felt by many that his presence would have completely frustrated the partly successful attempts which the new Party had made to drag the Congress at its heels.

In the following year at Calcutta, the breach widened, and the differences between the two wings of the Congress became more acute. An open rupture was only prevented by the action of Pherozeshah, Gokhale and one or two other Moderate leaders in installing the Grand Old Man of India in the presidential chair. It was a happy inspiration. The presence of the venerable apostle of Indian nationalism, long past the patriarchal age, coming from a far-off land to render his last service to the people whom he loved so well, exercised a restraining influence on the noisiest Extremist, and prevented a definite split within the ranks. Even so, the bark of the Congress was driven to perilous waters, and violent storms threatened to engulf it.

Immediately the Calcutta session was over, the apostles of the new cult started vigorous propaganda work throughout the country. Tilak opened the campaign at Allahabad

in January 1907, and he was shortly followed by his lieutenant Khaparde at Nagpur, where the ensuing Congress was to be held. The Moderate leaders were freely vilified by nationalist scribblers and orators, and were described as 'the most debased of humankind.' The work of preparation for the Congress at Nagpur was marked by the most disgraceful intrigues and scenes that ever disfigured the political annals of the country.

Finding that Nagpur was determined upon wrecking the Congress, Pherozeshah and his party reluctantly felt compelled to change the venue to some other place. At a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee held at his house, it was decided to transfer the sittings to Surat, which had gallantly come forward to undertake the heavy responsibility of holding the Congress in its midst. The rage of the Extremists knew no bounds. Their newspapers and politicians showered unstinted abuse on the Moderate leaders, particularly Pherozeshah, who was regarded as primarily responsible for the change of venue and whose inflexible will and masterful personality they recognized as the greatest obstacle to the success of their manoeuvres. Surat was jeered at as a sleepy hollow, and all sorts of threats were held out to those responsible for the arrangements for the forthcoming session.

The Extremist contingent arrived at Surat a couple of days before the appointed date and entrenched itself in a separate camp of its own. Its members came mostly from the Deccan, Berar and Bengal. According to the testimony of the late Mr. R. N. Mudholkar, one of the most respected of the old Congressmen, who lived to be appointed first President of the Central Provinces Legislative Council, the delegate and visitors from Berar included gymnastic teachers, proclaimed touts, workmen from factories,

fitters, oilmen *et hoc genus omne*. It was said that there were even some barbers from Nagpur!

At length the fateful December 27 arrived. The Congress met in a pandal erected in the old historic French Garden, which had been turned into a vast camp for the occasion. Over 1,600 delegates and 5,000 visitors were present. There was suppressed excitement in every face, and the scene was one of unusual animation.

A little after 2.30, the President-elect, Dr. Rash Behari Ghosh, arrived, accompanied by Messrs. Pherozeshah, Gokhale, Surendranath Bannerji and Tribhovandas Malvi, Chairman of the Reception Committee, a respected citizen of Surat practising as a solicitor in Bombay. The drooping spirits of the Moderates revived as they saw the hearty welcome accorded to Dr. Ghosh. When everyone had taken his seat on the platform, on which one noticed, among the men of light and leading from every province, Dr. Rutherford, one of the friends of India in Parliament, and Mr. Nevinson of the *Daily News*, some patriotic songs were sung, and at their conclusion, Mr. Malvi delivered his address of welcome to the delegates. He was heard in comparative silence, occasionally interrupted by shouts of dissent when he pleaded for moderation.

As soon as he sat down, Diwan Bahadur Ambalal Sankarlal, in a short speech, formally proposed Dr. Ghosh to the chair. The veteran Surendranath Bannerji rose to second the proposition with that sonorous eloquence which once had delighted thousands of his countrymen.

Hardly had he opened his lips when a section of the audience began to shout and create a disturbance which quickly grew into a violent tumult. Calls were made for Mr. Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai, and the speaker was sought to be shouted down. The insult offered to the eminent

leader of Bengal roused the indignation of most of the delegates, and half the audience were on their chairs shouting and howling against the moving spirits of the disturbance.

At this stage, the distracted Chairman of the Reception Committe got upon the table and declared that he would be obliged to suspend the sitting if order were not speedily restored. Surendranath Bannerji thereupon attempted to resume his speech from the elevated position which Mr. Malvi had occupied, but a regular pandemonium greeted his fresh effort. The audience got utterly out of hand. Excited individuals mounted the platform, scrambling across the chairs in the way, and offered to eject the rowdies by force. At 3.30 the meeting was suspended.

After the suspension of the Congress, an infuriated crowd of delegates and visitors followed Mr. Tilak and shouted 'Traitor, traitor.' There was considerable excitement everywhere, and peaceful Surat presented an unusually animated appearance.

At 1 p.m. on December 27, the Congress met again. As the President-elect was marching up to the dais, he was accorded an enthusiastic welcome by the vast majority of those present which put heart into his supporters and greatly restored their confidence. While the procession was entering, a small slip of paper was put in the hands of Mr. Malvi. It stated:

"Sir, I wish to address the delegates on the proposal of the election of the President after it is seconded. I wish to move an adjournment with a constructive proposal. Please announce me.

"Yours sincerely,
B. G. TILAK
Deccan Delegate (Poona)"

The Chairman hurriedly read this ominous message, and put the slip in his pocket. The proceedings were resumed at the point at which they had been interrupted, and Surendranath Bannerji was quietly allowed to finish his speech, the Poona and Nagpur Extremists listening in sullen silence. Pandit Motilal Nehru having duly supported the motion, the Chairman put it to the vote, and an overwhelming majority having shouted their assent, the motion was declared to have been carried.

Dr. Ghosh thereupon took the chair amidst loud and prolonged cheering from his supporters in all parts of the pandal. As he rose to deliver his address, up went Mr. Tilak on the platform, stood in front of the President, and demanded to be heard as he had given notice of an amendment. The Chairman of the Reception Committee pointed out that he could neither ask for an adjournment of the Congress at that stage, nor move an amendment to the election of the President, which had been duly passed. Mr. Tilak thereupon began to argue with Dr. Ghosh, who explained to him that he was out of order. He refused to submit to the ruling, however, and declared he would appeal to the delegates.

While this argument was taking place on the platform, the audience was already in a tumult. The rank and file of the Extremists were repeating their performance of the day before, and the rest of the audience was hurling imprecations on them and their leader.

Matters were now assuming an ugly aspect. The well-disciplined ranks of Poona and Nagpur with the *lathis* in their hands, with which they had thoughtfully provided themselves, were making a rush at the platform. The President realized the hopelessness of the situation, and appealed for the last time to the determined man with the folded

hands who would not be denied a hearing. But the appeal went unheeded. At this moment a Deccani shoe was hurled from the audience on to the platform, and grazing the Bengali hero, fallen from grace, struck Pherozeshah on the face. Pandemonium ensued; chairs were thrown at the dais, sticks were freely used, and more than one man on the platform was roughly handled. Pherozeshah seemed to excite in a particular degree the wrath of the hooligans, many of whom were supposed to be educated men. In the tumult, some of the Nagpur contingent rushed at him shouting, "We want to punish these Parsee rascals."

The scene may be described in the language of Mr. Nevinson, of *The Daily News* of London, who was present throughout, a keenly interested spectator:

"Suddenly something flew through the air. A shoe—a Mahratta shoe—reddish leather, pointed toe, sole studded with lead. It struck Surendranath Bannerji on the cheek; it cannoned off upon Sir Pherozeshah Mehta. It flew, it fell, and as at a given signal, white waves of turbaned men surged up the escarpment of the platform. Leaping, climbing, hissing the breath of fury, brandishing long sticks, they came, striking at any head that looked to them Moderate, and in another moment, between brown legs standing upon the green-baize table, I caught glimpses of the Indian National Congress dissolving in chaos."

There was no help for it now but to suspend the Congress *sine die,* which the President did amidst scenes of indescribable confusion. The ladies in the audience were hastily taken away to a place of safety. Mr. Tilak was borne off by his followers. Pherozeshah, Gokhale and others were escorted out of the place by a back entrance. Free fighting continued to rage in the pandal, however, and the police had ultimately to come in and clear the gathering.

It was an unforgettable, and to most of the old leaders, an unnerving experience. In a tent outside, to which a hurried advance had to be made, they stood. flushed and angry, and unable to think clearly of the situation that had arisen. Poor sensitive Gokhale trembled with excitement and indignation. Almost alone among the old leaders, Pherozeshah walked about calm and unmoved. Not all the execrations and calumnies directed against him for months past, not even that Deccani shoe were able to impair the robust confidence of the man or affect his clarity of vision or political judgment. Interviewed shortly afterwards. he smiled and said that he knew it was coming very soon and that he was inclined to regard it as a blessing in disguise. The Congress would emerge stronger and healthier from the ordeal, and would not be dragged at the heels of the noisy politicians who threatened to destroy its reputation for moderation and sanity. The separation was inevitable, unless the Congress was to submit to the rule of the Extremists. He was glad the Moderates had managed to avoid the grand mistake of using force against Mr. Tilak, and had thus placed the onus of the split on him.

On the evening of the memorable day, which saw the break-up of the session, a large number of leading delegates met in Pherozeshah's quarters to consider what steps should be taken to continue the work of the Congress. It was resolved to hold a convention the next day of all those delegates to the Congress who were agreed that the attainment by India of self-government, similar to that enjoyed by the self-governing members of the British Empire, was the goal of Indian aspirations, that the advance towards this goal was to be by strictly constitutional means and that all meetings held for the promotion of these aims and objects were to be conducted in an orderly manner with due

submission to the authority of those who were entrusted with the power to control their procedure.

The Convention was held on December 28 in the *pandal* where two days before *lathis* and shoes and broken chairs had been freely flying about. The delegates to the Convention were required to sign a declaration before tickets were issued to them for admission. For further precaution, volunteers were posted at the gates, who excluded known agitators without offering them an opportunity of signing the declaration. An ample force of police was in guard at the place, ready for any surprises which the Poona and Nagpur contingents might spring upon the gathering.

In moving the election of Dr. Ghosh to the chair, Pherozeshah observed that he had once spoken from the Congress platform of an unconventional convention for the purpose of promoting the interests of the country. He did not think then that in process of time, they would have to meet in the form of a convention for the purpose of resuscitating the work which had gone on for 23 years with the co-operation of all the provinces. The motion was seconded by Surendranath Bannerji and supported by Lala Lajpat Rai. There was only one resolution on the agenda paper, and it was moved by Gokhale. It declared that the object of the convention lay chiefly in the first two articles of the Declaration already signed by the delegates, and in reviving the Congress in accordance with its terms.

A committee was appointed to draft a constitution. It may be mentioned in passing that it met at Allahabad in April 1908, settled the constitution and passed a set of rules for the conduct and regulation of Congress meetings. The creed of the Congress so settled was to be subscribed to unconditionally by every delegate.

Thus ended the first chapter in the history of the Indian National Congress. On an impartial consideration of all the facts and arguments bearing on the subject, it is impossible to resist the conclusion that the wreck of the session at Surat was carefully planned and deliberately carried out. A telegram had been received from the Extremist headquarters at Calcutta which said, "Blow up if everything else fails", and every manoeuvre in the game shows how the mandate was carried out.

It is true that differences of outlook and methods between the two parties made an early rupture inevitable. The Extremists had charted the seas and mapped out the course they were determined to pursue. The Moderates were equally determined to go along the path they had trodden with a dogged perseverance for many a year. At their head, supported by Gokhale and a band of able and loyal adherents, stood Pherozeshah, with his great skill in the handling of men and his unbending will in matters of principle. Such a dreaded opponent could neither be converted nor crushed. Small hope, therefore, that the two parties could have evolved a common programme or stood for long on a common platform. But the fight at Surat was not the natural outcome of a clash of principles. It was a piece of organized hooliganism, bringing a measure of discredit upon the national movement which clung to it for years. It also infused a bitterness into the political life of India, which had a baleful effect on the future course of events.

When the Extremists contemplated their handiwork on the morrow of that eventful session, it was to be overwhelmed with a feeling that a cardinal blunder had been committed. In the euphemistic language of Mr. Khaparde, "regret at the occurences, irrespective of the causes that led

to them, appeared to be universal, coupled with a desire that a *modus operandi* should be found to bring all concerned together and arrange for an adjustment, honourable to all alike and calculated to further the cause of the Congress." The Nationalist party clearly saw that in wrecking the Congress, it had lost a powerful weapon for the furtherance of its political purposes, and it was anxious to repair the tactical mistake it had committed.

It carried on a vigorous campaign in favour of a united Congress and strove hard to show that the differences between the two parties were not irreconcilable.

It was at this moment, when a mood of doubt and hesitancy was seizing even the sober and the thoughtful that Mr. Bhupendranath Basu wrote to Pherozeshah asking for an expression of his views on the proposed re-union of the parties. The reply was in the nature of a bomb-shell thrown in the camp of the Extremists. Said he:

"I cannot help saying that there is a great deal of mawkish sentimentality in the passionate appeals for union at all cost. For my part, I think it is most desirable that each set of distinct convictions should have its separate Congress. To jumble them up in one body confuses the real understanding of the extent to which opinion really tends in one direction or another, and it is not possible to make out what the dimensions of the cleavage and difference of opinion existing on any particular question are.

"It is, therefore, desirable that persons holding nearly the same opinions and principles should organize themselves into bodies where they can expound them and lay them before the public in a clear and consistent form. The public could then have the issue clearly before them, and their deliberate judgment can declare itself by the growing favour they would accord to any particular association.

"For God's sake let us have done with all inane and slobbery whine about unity where there is really none. Let each consistent body of views and principles have its own Congress in an honest and straightforward way, and let God, i.e., truth and wisdom, judge between us all."

The letter, widely published, was the topic of the hour everywhere. Sober politicians throughout the country admired its manly tone and its strong commonsense. In equal measure, it received the condemnation of Extremist politicians, who were furious at what was undoubtedly a knock-out blow calculated to put an end to their little campaign. 'Choice epithets of cultured Billingsgate' was the comment of one of their organs on the offending letter.

It is necessary at this point to anticipate matters a little and to follow the fortunes of the Congress somewhat further on its onward journey. The Madras session, which followed the Surat split, had proved a success and falsified the gloomy forebodings of hostile critics. The struggle was not at an end, however, and there were many in the camp of the Moderates who were anxious to close up the ranks and sighed for a united Cogress.

The next session was to be held at Lahore, and it was expected that a concerted opposition would be offered to the newly-framed constitution. A strong President was required in the circumstances, and the choice of the Provincial Congress Committees almost unanimously fell on Pherozeshah. The only dissentient voice was that of Bengal, which, more than any other province, desired a rapprochement and which did not relish the idea of having at the helm a resolute man who knew his own mind and had his own way of dealing with timidity and vacillation.

Matters were in this state, when one fine morning, just a fortnight before the due date, the country was startled

by the news that Pherozeshah had suddenly resigned the Presidentship of the Congress. The telegram, which conveyed the decision to Lala Harkishan Lal, Chairman of the Reception Committee, was as brief as it was enigmatic:

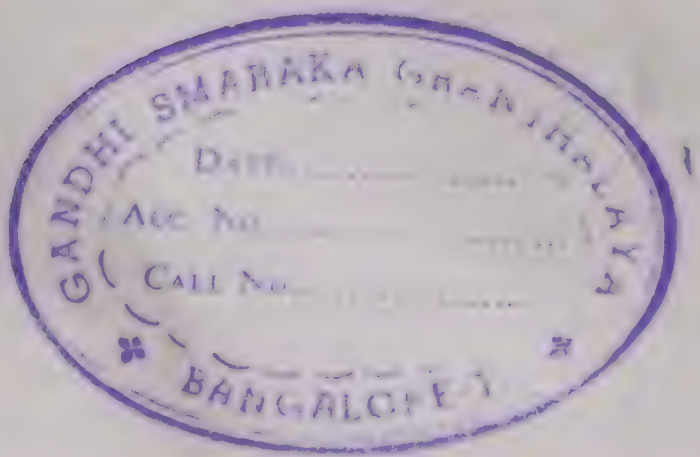
"I deeply regret that owing to a combination of unexpected circumstances, I am compelled to relinquish the honour."

The country was bewildered. Not even the closest friends of Pherozeshah suspected his intentions or could guess at the reasons prompting this extraordinary step which threw the Congress into utter confusion. The President-elect was as silent and mysterious as the Sphinx. The air became thick with rumours and surmises. Some said that Pherozeshah had lost faith in his former political followers and associates, and did not care again to run the risk of insult and molestation. Others concluded that 'the deep political reasons supposed to underlie his action had no better foundation than a meticulous reluctance to preside over a Congress that bade fair to be either a frost or a riot'. Yet others declared that while Pherozeshah was well aware of the strong feeling against him in certain circles, he accepted the Presidentship in the anticipation that the opposition would gradually evaporate in face of the settled fact. Finding that this was not the case, and that in fact only a very few days before, criticism had been strongly expressed, with characteristic impulsiveness he had suddenly decided to resign rather than occupy a position, his fitness for which was not acquiesced in by all parties.

A stout and fearless fighter, the act was strangely inconsistent with the whole record of his life. From the day he had stood up bravely, while a very young man, in defence of the Crawford regime, against a host of hostile critics, he had never paltered with his convictions, or run away from

a fight because the odds were against him, and it is hardly possible that on the present occasion he shrank from fear. But whatever the motives operating on his mind, it cannot be gainsaid that his decision was as unwise as it was unfortunate. There were trouble and unrest in the land, a wave of discontent was sweeping over the country, anarchism had reared its ugly head, its bloody trail was steadily lengthening. The voice of reason and moderation had been silenced. In the counsels of Government, reactionary influences were at work, and repression was rampant, growing with the growth of the new forces that had arisen. Not even the Reforms seemed able to stem the tide of sedition and anarchy and the repressive legislation they brought in their train.

At such a moment, it is easy to understand how anxiously India was waiting for a lead, for some weighty pronouncement on the attitude both of the Government and the people. But the lead was never given, and the man best fitted to sound the note of reason and true statesmanship, and to inspire the country with his own robust optimism and his abiding faith in peaceful and ordered progress, had retreated, with an abrupt gesture, into the background and left his following wondering and helpless.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Chapter XXIV

THE MORLEY-MINTO REFORMS

1907—1909

THE tide of Liberalism, which started in Britain in the closing months of 1905, synchronised with the departure of Lord Curzon from India, and raised high the hopes of Indian reforms. It was an article of faith with Pherozeshah that the salvation of India lay with the Liberals, and he was never tired of emphasising this point of view.

Lord Curzon was succeeded by Lord Minto who, soon after his arrival in August 1906, appointed a small committee of his Council to consider, among other matters, the increase of the representative element in the Indian and Provincial Legislative Councils. He recognized the vast changes that had taken place in the world situation:

"All Asia was marvelling at the victories of Japan over a European power. Their effects were far-reaching. New possibilities seemed to spring into existence, there were indications of a popular demand in China, in Persia, in Egypt and in Turkey. There was an awakening of the Eastern world, and, though, to outward appearances, India was quiet, in the sense that there was at the moment no visible acute political agitation, she had not escaped the general infection."

Lord Minto was, above all things, anxious that the Government of India should not be put in the position of appearing to have their hands forced by agitation in this country or by pressure from Home, and he bent himself to the task with energy and goodwill. In due course, the reform proposals of the Government were published. They

were found to have been conceived in a narrow spirit, and there was little in them of that spacious statesmanship which people associated with the name of John Morley. The position in India was becoming one of great difficulty. The forces of unrest and anarchism had grown in strength and violence, and brought in their train repressive legislation such as the country had never known. Among other measures, a Press Act was passed, introduced in the Council by the then Law Member, Sir S. P. Sinha, not yet on the highest rung of his remarkable political career, and warmly supported by Gokhale and the majority of his non-official colleagues.

It is interesting to note, in passing, that on Gokhale's return to Bombay after the close of the session at which the Act was passed, Pherozeshah expressed strong disapproval of his attitude towards the measure. On Gokhale pleading helplessness in the face of the evidence produced by the Government of the seditious character of many of the writings in the Indian Press, Pherozeshah replied with some vehemence that the non-official members had no business to support it even in spite of the plea of necessity. The Government had never listened to the advice of the leaders of the people on matters of policy, and when it came to forging repressive legislation, they wanted the latter to share the responsibility and the odium. It was a great mistake, therefore, on the part of the Indian members of the Council to support the Press Act. They ought rather to have asked the Government to go into the root causes of the violent propaganda preached in many of the Indian papers. Gokhale listened in silence, feeling perhaps, that his leader was taking an extreme attitude.

The facts are that Gokhale did not actually support the Bill. He could not, however, conscientiously oppose its

principles in view of the wild writings in the Indian Press in those days.

To resume our story of the events that led up to the Reforms, people were losing their faith in a Secretary of State who had imbibed his political philosophy from some of the greatest minds of the age, but who did not seem to differ very greatly in his methods from a sun-dried bureaucrat.

The original proposals were subjected to a great deal of useful and intelligent criticism. The Bombay Presidency Association sent, in February 1908, a weighty and dignified representation, drafted by Pherozeshah himself, analysing some of the reactionary features of the scheme before the country, viz., the creation of Advisory Councils, the narrowness of the franchise in the Legislative Councils, the maintenance of official majorities and the denial of any share in the executive government of the country.

If the Government of India really wanted to know the better mind of the country, they had ample material in this as well as numbers of other representations which reached them from all parts of the country. At the other end, the Secretary of State put himself in constant touch with the best exponents of the Indian point of view. The indefatigable Gokhale, the sagacious Wedderburn, and that noble statesman who was the first to breathe into India the impulse of freedom, the venerable Lord Ripon, were always at his elbow. Mr. Morley himself, though cautious and conservative at times, was resolute and masterful, and faithful to those great principles which have made him one of the most inspiring figures in the political life of our time.

With such forces at work, the Morley Minto scheme ultimately took shape as a liberal measure of reform calculated to conciliate the large body of responsible politi-

cians in India. It succeeded in rallying the Moderates to the support of the Government, as its distinguished authors were anxious it should.

A representative of *The Times of India* interviewed Pherozeshah on December 15, 1908, and asked him for his views on the scheme. The latter declared it was a very genuine effort, and he was more than pleased. It bore out what he had always maintained, namely, that any substantial step in reforming the constitutional machinery could only come from the Liberal Party. He found it difficult to conceive that any Conservative Government could have designed a measure of so liberal a character.

The Bombay correspondent of *The Capital,* in an outburst of enthusiasm, described the Morley-Minto Reforms as a personal triumph for Pherozeshah.

The rules and regulations framed in connection with the Morley-Minto Reforms were of a retrograde character and robbed the scheme of much of its value and statesmanlike purpose. They hastened the demand which was to spring up within a very few years for a measure of self-government which would give the representatives of the people a real voice in the administration of the country's affairs—a vastly different thing from the opportunities of influencing the course of events which was practically what the Act of 1909 and the rules framed under it provided.

Chapter XXV

LORD SYDENHAM AND THE UNIVERSITY

1909—1912

LORD Curzon had claimed for his Universities legislation that a new life for higher education in India had begun. But as with other ambitious schemes of that restless Viceroy, the work to which he had set his hand languished after his retirement, and many thorny questions remained unsettled. They formed a fruitful source of controversy a few years later when Sir George Clarke came out as Governor of Bombay, and decided to put the coping stone on Lord Curzon's work.

The new Governor lost no time in formulating his ideas and setting things in motion for carrying them into effect. Hostilities commenced with a letter from the Government to the University, dated December 18, 1908, which purported to be a reply to a request from the Senate to the Chancellor for advice regarding the changes necessary in the curriculum. The letter stated that radical reforms were necessary if the teaching of science and higher education generally were to be brought into harmony with modern requirements.

The proposals which were formulated were, briefly, the abolition of the Matriculation and Previous examinations, college exminations being substituted in their places, the curtailment of the compulsory, and enlargement of the number of optional, subjects; the strengthening of science courses and teaching generally; and a revision of the courses and subjects for the various university examina-

tions. The Senate appointed, in March 1909, a committee for considering and reporting on these proposals. The committee issued its report in October, but it was not till January 15, 1910, that the subject came up for discussion before the Senate, presided over by Sir Narayan Chandravarkar, then Vice-Chancellor. It was a curious report altogther. It was signed by six members while the dissenting minute contained seven signatures!

When the report was placed before the Senate, Pherozeshah moved that the letter of the Government and the recommendations of the committee be recorded. Then followed a series of detailed propositions based on the report of the committee, which had negatived almost all the recommendations made by Government. In a speech which, at the end of an hour and a half, still remained unfinished and which, 'as a feat of endurance reflected equal credit on the audience and the orator', as was sarcastically observed by one of his critics, Pherozeshah vehemently criticized the attitude adopted by Government in dealing with the question.

He condemned their interference in the work of the Senate as extremely undesirable, and as unwise as it was impolitic. He thought every Fellow of the Senate must to a certain extent feel that organized as that body was, it would be far better for the integrity and independence of the University to allow educationists to bring forward proposals in the first instance, and then send them to the Governor-in-Council for sanction.

He put it to them whether it was not right, wise and constitutional that they should be allowed without any direct interference from Government to work out the principles and details of the educational system in a manner that was considered to be best by the deliberate and

collective wisdom of that body.

After a protracted debate which occupied three sittings, the first part of Pherozeshah's motion for recording the Government letter and report of the committee was carried. Then came the fight over the various propositions moved by him, particularly with regard to the Matriculation examination, which he was strongly for retaining and which Government and their supporters in the Senate were desirous of abolishing.

In replying to the discussion, Pherozeshah compared it with an imaginary debate on the abolition of the institution of matrimony, and asked whether it would be right to do away with such an institution because it was not free from defects and disadvantages. It is not possible to say how many votes this homely argument captured, but the majority in favour of the proposition was very large, and the ill-fated examination, the sport of warring factions, for the time being at least, escaped the destructive zeal of the reformer.

Soon after this, Pherozeshah left for Europe and did not return till the beginning of the following year. The opportunity was too good to be missed, and Mr. Sharp, Director of Public Instruction, who was the official mouthpiece of the Government, brought up again before the Senate all the proposals originally formulated by Government excepting the abolition of the Matriculation examination, and in October 1910, they were adopted 'with such modifications as were needed to make the transition to a new period smooth and continuous.

A committee was appointed to frame detailed regulations for the Arts courses. The unfortunate P.E. was left alone for the time being. It did not survive long, however, and on January 25, 1913, it too received its death-warrant.

The next stage in the proceedings was when the committee appointed to revise the Arts courses submitted its report to the Senate, which considered it on July 17, 1911. A considerable amount of heat was engendered on this occasion by the reactionary proposal to drop the study of English history from the list of compulsory subjects in the B.A. examination. It was moved by Mr. Natarajan, the talented editor of the *Indian Social Reformer,* and all the forces of Government were arrayed in support of it. A whip had been issued, and a machine-made majority had gathered, obedient to the call to carry out the behests of a reactionary Governor.

The bureaucratic imagination had taken fright at the idea of raw youths being fed on the noble story of the struggle for freedom which enriches the pages of English history. Away, therefore, with such pernicious literature in the blessed name of specialization!

Pherozeshah was vehemently opposed to the change. The manner in which it was sought to be introduced was calculated to prevent the Senate from approaching the consideration of the question on its merits. Gokhale had alluded to the 'whip', and the Director of Public Instruction had replied by asking whether Pherozeshah had never issued one. The latter indignantly repudiated the suggestion:

"Mr. Sharp will be surprised to hear that in the course of a public career which has extended over 40 years, not only in this University, not only in the Municipality, but also in the Legislative Councils of this country, both Imperial and Provincial, there has never been a time when I have issued a whip. And why? Because I was brought up in the historical traditions of the great beings who have guided the educational history of this Presidency, whose

antecedents and traditions have been respectfully watched by people like me and who have always taught us that in a body constituted like the Senate of the University, it was wrong, improper and objectionable to issue a whip."

Pherozeshah was emphatically of opinion that if the Senate specialised in the manner in which they were asked to do, they would be emasculating the growth and culture of the students trained under such a system. The study of English History was of paramount importance to the people, and particularly to the rising educated classes of this country. Not all the eloquence, incisiveness and readiness of argument of the speaker, which had so often turned defeat ino victory, were able, however, to influence the serried ranks which the mandate from the Chancellor had brought together, and the proposal of Mr. Natarajan was carried.

A few months afterwards, Pherozeshah attempted to re-open the subject when the revised regulations for the B.A. examination, recommended by the Syndicate, were placed before the Senate for moving an amendment for the inclusion of English History in the compulsory group. The Vice-Chancellor ruled the amendment out of order. Pherozeshah wanted to be heard before the point was decided, and he made more than one attempt to speak. But the Vice-Chancellor was obdurate and declined to allow Pherozeshah to address him with regard to his ruling.

The various other 'reforms' on which Lord Sydenham had set his heart were carried at later meetings of the Senate, and the long-drawn battle ended, in which the honours went to the vanquished and the spoils to the victor.

Chapter XXVI

VISIT TO EUROPE

1910-1911

FEW men had led such a crowded life as Pherozeshah, and the strain of it began to tell increasingly as he approached the Psalmist's 'three score and ten'. His regular habits and frequent visits to Matheran and other hill stations had enabled him all these years to maintain his strength and activities; but prolonged and complete rest was necessary to a man who was required to be in the thick of the fight at every place.

Since his last trip to Europe in 1897, he had not enjoyed much rest or known a real holiday. It was necessary for him to tear himself completely away from his surroundings and to get away to a place where the dust and heat of political controversy might not affect him. He decided accordingly to leave for Europe in the summer of 1910.

There was a general desire to give him a public entertainment before his departure, and a representative committee was formed for carrying out the arrangements. The entertainment came off on April 18, 1910, in the spacious grounds of the Princess Mary Victoria Gymkhana at Colaba, tastefully decorated for the occasion, and was very largely attended by men and women of all communities. Lord Sydenham conveyed his regrets at being unavoidably absent, and felt confident that "the universal appreciation of Sir Pherozeshah's eminent services to Bombay" would ensure the success of the entertainment. A letter was also received from the venerable Dadabhai Naoroji, which stated that

"for his great services to the city as well as to the whole country, Sir Pherozeshah richly deserved their gratitude."

Pherozeshah, in those felicitous terms which he knew how to employ on occasions of this character, thanked those present for the honour they had done him. He told them of an incident in his early career which was not generally known:

"I remember that immediately after I began my career, I had to make a choice between entering public service—I mean official service—and entering, if I may so discriminate, the service of the public. It is not known even to some of my most intimate friends that very shortly after my return from England after being called to the Bar, an eminent member of Government—a most broadminded man and a man of high liberal culture—sent for me and offered me the post of first-class sub-judgeship.

"It was a problem that I had to solve, for though I had joined the lawyer's profession, briefs were not too frequently coming in those days, and some of my friends taunted me that my income just enabled me to go to an ice-cream shop. But I unhesitatingly chose to enter the service of the public. And the reason why I am grateful to you for this gathering and hospitality is that you accept what I have done during the last more than forty years as showing that I have not entirely thrown away the years without doing some little and abiding good."

On April 23, Pherozeshah left for England with Lady Mehta, his second wife—his first wife, whom he had married before he left for England to study for the Bar, had died in November, 1907—and had a hearty send-off at the Pier.

The voyage was pleasant and uneventful, and Pherozeshah felt none of that sickness which had made his first sea trip such an agonising experience. After doing Naples,

Rome, Florence and other places, the party reached Paris on June 1.

On the continent, Pherozeshah attracted considerable attention wherever he went. He had a presence which easily picked him out from a crowd, and dress and manner alike added a touch of distinction. His style of living and the Turkish cap he affected so impressed a hotel manager that he thought the distinguished stranger was the Shah of Persia!

He did not stay long on the Continent, for, with his tastes and habits, he soon got tired of sight-seeing, and he was anxious to get to London where his friends desired him to meet some of the leading figures in English political life. His arrival was prominently noticed in several London and provincial newspapers, and he received marked attention in quarters sympathetic towards Indian interests.

Sir William Wedderburn, the good old friend of India, was particularly anxious to secure Pherozeshah's co-operation on the ill-fated partition of Bengal. A Bengali deputation, headed by Surendranath Bannerji and Bhupendranath Basu, was to plead with Lord Morley the cause of their unhappy province, and a determined attempt was to be made to unsettle the 'settled fact'. Sir William feared that the arrival of a formal and public deputation would stir up all the mischievous activity of the enemies of India's progress in Parliament and the Press, and he greatly preferred Pherozeshah undertaking the task and holding the brief for Bengal.

Pherozeshah saw Lord Morley, and later on, his successor, Lord Crewe, and had long discussions with them. He also met the new Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, who was particularly anxious to know at first hand the views of so eminent an Indian on the general political situation. These

interviews greatly strengthened the efforts which Sir William Wedderburn was making to undo what Bengali opinion regarded as a grievous wrong.

Another direction in which Pherozeshah exerted himself while in London was with reference to the settlement of the outstanding differences between the Hindus and Mohamedans. The Mohamedan community, owing to its general illiteracy and the consequent weakness of its position, had hitherto pursued a barren policy, and kept itself more or less aloof from the currents of national life.

The time had come for removing the more acute differences and bringing the communities closer together. Sir William was going out to India as President of the next Congress, and the idea was to hold a friendly conference in Bombay for the purpose of clearing the ground and doing away, if possible, with the conflict of principles and interests which had so long kept the two communities apart. At a banquet given in London to the President-elect, Mr. Amir Ali and Pherozeshah formally mooted the proposal, which had the support of the Aga Khan as well. The outlook appeared to be hopeful, and Pherozeshah was confident that the conference would bring about a closer feeling of comradeship. He himself did not expect to be present at it, though Sir William offered to postpone his departure from Bombay after the Congress was over if Pherozeshah could return to the City a little sooner and take the conference under his sheltering wing.

Altogether, Pherozeshah had a very pleasant and profitable holiday, and did much to bring home to English statesmen the realities of the Indian situation. His personality lent prestige to the cause he was advocating, and greatly strengthened it.

Chapter XXVII

CLOSING YEARS

1911—1915

THE closing years of Pherozeshah's career were in some respects the most difficult period of his life. Struggling against physical infirmities and the encroachments of age, he was called upon to defend his position against the assaults delivered on it by an autocratic Governor, Lord Sydenham, who found in 'Ferocious' Mehta the most formidable opponent of his reactionary policy. The question had to be decided, who was to reign in Bombay; the masterful leader who had so long dominated the Corporation, the Senate and the Council, or the equally masterful administrator who was apt to approach problems of Government from the point of view of military scientist. There were once two kings in Brentford; there certainly could not be two in Bombay.

The stage was soon reached when the views of the two men came into sharp conflict. The struggle began with the question of University reform, and was carried into the Council where the atmosphere often became uncomfortably hot. The situation was aggravated when Lord Sydenham thought fit on a notable occasion to silence his opponent by a rigid application of the 'time limit'. It was at a meeting of the Council held at Poona on July 25, 1911 that the incident took place.

The annual Budget was under consideration, and the discussion had turned on the question of the powers of taxation of Provincial Councils. The Finance Member, Sir

John Muir Mackenzie, had in the previous year strongly urged that the Council be invested with the requisite power to impose the taxation necessary to meet its requirements and that dependence on the Imperial Government be done away with altogether. That was the only way in which financial and administrative responsibility would be brought home to the Council and the people. As an abstract proposition, nothing could be more admirable, and Mr. (later Sir) Fazulbhoy Currimbhoy supported it at the Budget meeting the year after. Pherozeshah, however, would have none of it. In his opinion, until the Council was so constituted as to represent the direct voice of the people, it was disastrous to invest it with any powers of taxation. He was not enamoured of non-official members. They were sometimes more official than the officials themselves.

The honourable member went on to speak some very unpalatable home-truths whereupon Lord Sydenham lost his patience and interposed, "Two minutes more, Sir Pherozeshah." "Two minutes more!" indignantly exclaimed Pherozeshah. Well then, he said, he could not use the precious moments better than by protesting against such an exercise of discretion vested in His Excellency under the rules. To give twenty minutes to a member for a general debate involving all the heads of the Budget was simply to stop his mouth.

This protest was followed up by a long letter to the Press, of which the autocratic Governor took occasion to disapprove at the earliest opportunity.

On another occasion, when a Bill for amending the Improvement Trust Act was before the Council, Lord Sydenham ruled out of order an amendment moved by Pherozeshah who, according to a newspaper comment of

that time, 'knew more about constitutional procedure than the whole box and dice of the Government of Bombay'.

Despite these perpetual differences and conflicts, there existed between the two men a feeling of mutual respect. It was characteristic of Pherozeshah that when the Governor, on the eve of his retirement, was elevated to the peerage, he paid the latter a handsome tribute, remembering what he owed to himself and the Council as Leader of the Opposition. It was not the first time he showed himself mindful of the conventions—which weaker men call the hypocrisies—of public life, so often lost sight of in the dust and heat of political controversy.

With the retirement of Lord Sydenham and the advent of a Governor with liberal tendencies, Pherozeshah's power and influence revived, and he became once more the virtual dictator in public affairs that he had been for so many years. His prestige and popularity among the people had, of course, never been impaired. Whether outvoted in the Senate and the Council and defeated on large questions of policy, his supremacy had always remained unchallenged. Opponents who fondly believed he was extinct repeatedly found themselves disillusioned.

The new Governor, Lord Willingdon, brought up in the vivifying atmosphere of the House of Commons, had the sagacity to recognize in the formidable critic of Government a most valued asset, and showed himself anxious to seek his co-operation on every occasion. Thus it came about that during the last two years of his long and varied career, Pherozeshah wielded an influence over the 'intelligentsia' almost as great as was enjoyed by him in his palmiest days.

His activities during this period were remarkable, and his mind remained unclouded to the end. He spoke at

public meetings with all his accustomed vigour, and there was no more vigilant critic in the Legislative Council.

Among his last public appearances on the platform are two which stand out for different reasons. The first was at a meeting held in the Town Hall on August 13, 1914, to give expression to the feelings of loyalty and devotion which the War had aroused amongst large sections of the people. Pherozeshah presided and, on rising to speak, was accorded a rousing reception. His voice was weak and he said but little: but it was one of the most memorable speeches he ever made.

Equally solemn, but in a different sense, was the occasion on which Pherozeshah stood for what proved to be the last time on the Town Hall platform, trying to give expression in a broken voice to his sorrow at the death of a most valued friend and colleague. The fell disease against which Gokhale had struggled manfully for years had at length cut him off in the prime of life when the country most needed him. He died while engaged in a solution of the momentous problems that confronted India at one of the turning points in her history.

When Pherozeshah rose to speak, looking forlorn and ill, and with, as it appeared to many, the shadow of death hanging over him, the pathos of the situation struck the audience. He spoke in a voice broken by emotion—the fire seemed to have vanished from tone and gesture—and sounded a personal note which greatly touched all present. He expressed his inability to do justice to the life and career of that eminent Servant of India whose death they had met to mourn.

"Even if I attempted to make a long speech, I feel I could not have spoken connectedly and coherently for the reason that I feel so sad, so depressed, so forsaken, advanc-

ing as I am in years, on seeing valued and beloved colleague after colleague dropping away from my side. Telang has been gathered to his fathers, Ranade is no more amongst us, Budrudin has passed away; our beloved Gokhale, alas!, has now closed his eyes for ever and for ever, and many others whom I could name, are leaving me, one after another, forsaken and desolate. I feel almost alone in the stupendous work for the country which is still pending before us."

The speaker could not but recall with a keen sense of regret what plans Gokhale had laid down and what hopes he had entertained for the development and advancement of the country. Without his help, guidance and co-operation, Pherozeshah continued, he did not know how to persevere with the task which they had set before themselves.

The Report of the Public Service Commission was then under discussion; the union of the two parties within the Congress was being debated: and Gokhale had conceived the idea, while in London in the Autumn of 1914, of drawing up a scheme of reforms in consultation with the Aga Khan and Pherozeshah, and submitting it to Government after it had been approved by the Congress and the Moslem League. On many of the issues arising out of these questions, the two leaders had been more or less in complete agreement. Considerable cordiality had marked their last meeting which took place at Pherozeshah's residence in Bombay. The writer happened to be present, and was struck by the warmth of friendly feeling with which the two men greeted each other. They were to meet again in company with the Aga Khan to discuss the all-important question of the reforms.

Perhaps the very last letter which Gokhale wrote was addressed to Pherozeshah and related to the scheme which

was uppermost in his thoughts and to which a passing reference must be made in this place. There was a difference of opinion between them on a fundamental point in the scheme. Gokhale favoured the idea of the German, Austrian and American system of a powerful executive, not responsible to the legislature on the one hand, and on the other, a legislature directly elected by the people, independent in its own domain. Pherozeshah was for development on the historical lines of the British constitution and strongly favoured a system of responsibility through the legislature.

These conflicting views were never thrashed out by the three leaders at a joint conference which they intended holding; and when the Aga Khan saw Gokhale at Poona, the latter, realizing that his end was near, said he would draw up a scheme embodying his own ideas, and would leave it behind him as his last will and testament. This was done and the Aga Khan received a copy of it a few days after, as also did Pherozeshah. But the scheme on which the dying statesman had set his heart went no further, for Pherozeshah could not overcome his objection to its central idea: the War, which was expected to be over by the end of 1915, continued to lengthen its shadow over the face of the earth.

Ultimately, when the Aga Khan published the political testament of his friend, perhaps as a corrective to the wild ideas which were seizing the minds of people, things had changed a great deal. India had taken vast strides, and a scheme which might ordinarily have satisfied the aspirations of her sons for a generation came to be regarded as timid and halting and out of place in a new-born world throbbing with strange hopes and ambitions.

Pherozeshah's activities on the platform and in the

Council were not to put a seal on his career. He had the good fortune of achieving, towards the end of his life, two objects which were close to his heart. One of them was the founding of a daily newspaper pledged to carry out the policy of his party. It was the fruition of efforts which had gone on in one shape or another for nearly a quarter of a century.

The newspaper, called *The Bombay Chronicle*, saw the light of day in April 1913. Edited by an exceptionally able writer, it soon became a power in the land. The firm direction exercised over its policy by Pherozeshah as Chairman of the Board, while it added weight and dignity to its expression of opinion, prevented it from straying into dangerous paths. Within a short time, it began to exercise an enormous influence over public affairs and more than fulfilled the fond hopes of its promoters. Pherozeshah's interest in the career of his pet child was intense, and his control of its management and policy entailed an amount of trouble and anxiety which told on his health. But he cheerfully bore the burden, happy in the knowledge that he had at length provided Bombay with a paper which mercilessly attacked cant, injustice and hypocrisy wherever it found them, and which became a sort of a terror to those in authority.

To add to the anxieties consequent upon the establishment of *The Bombay Chronicle*, a financial crisis of a particularly severe character overtook Bombay in 1913, and for reasons to be presently stated caused Pherozeshah no little uneasiness. The collapse of the Credit and the Indian Specie banks, induced by colossal gambling operations, threw the money market into a state of confusion and panic, and threatened to involve even well-managed concerns in one vast ruin.

The Central Bank of India, which Pherozeshah had

helped to found at the end of 1911, suffered with the rest. Ably managed as it was by Mr. S. N. Pochkhanawala, the young banker who was directing its operations, there commenced a steady and continuous run on its deposits which dwindled at an alarming rate. The position caused no little anxiety to Pherozeshah as Chairman of the Board. His name had inspired confidence in the public and had materially contributed to the successful flotation of the Bank. It was due to his insistence that the Articles had been changed so as to give stricter control over the Manager to the Directors of the Bank in the interests of the shareholders. Its stability was, therefore, a matter of anxious concern to him.

He was so keen on saving it from being submerged beneath the wave of panic which swept over Bombay that he went to the length of offering to deposit the title-deeds of his various properties for the purpose of raising monies for financing the Bank. This gesture restored confidence in the Bank and helped it to tide over the crisis. Its subsequent career would have delighted none more than its first Chairman who had all his life been as staunch an advocate of indigenous enterprise as he was of an indigenous system of government.

An event of special significance at this time was Pherozeshah's appointment as Vice-Chancellor of the University in March 1915. That Pherozeshah had rendered the University distinguished services over the years, in spite of a certain conservatism of outlook, cannot be gainsaid. And yet they remained without any practical recognition till very nearly the close of his long career. It was to the credit of Lord Willingdon that he seized the earliest opportunity of putting at the head of the University administration one who, though he could not be regarded as an edu-

cationist, was undoubtedly the most outstanding man in the Senate.

There was bitter disappointment, however, in store for all, and for none more than for Pherozeshah himself. His health was fast growing worse, and he found himself unable to discharge the duties of his office. He could not preside over the deliberations of the Senate, nor gratify the anxious desire of a public eager to know what he had to say from his place as Vice-Chancellor on the problems of higher education. His Convocation address would certainly have proved a remarkable utterance, as unlike the pronouncements of his predecessors in office as one could expect in a man so different from his contemporaries.

But it was willed otherwise, and the helplessness of the situation preyed deeply on his mind. He once told the writer how keenly he regretted his inability to grasp the unique opportunities which had at length come his way as the administrative head of the University, and how this sense of helplessness was affecting his health and spirits.

Pherozeshah's disabilities were purely physical. He suffered from his old kidney trouble, and his heart was affected. The latter symptom caused his friends a good deal of anxiety. On one occasion, while addressing the Corporation, he stopped suddenly, and for a few moments appeared to be breathing with difficulty. Medical assistance was immediately available, but it was not wanted for, to the intense relief of those around him, he began to revive after he had swallowed something which he kept in his pocket for emergency. As time went on, these attacks became more frequent, and caused considerable apprehension among his friends. Though Pherozeshah's health had broken down, his mind remained unclouded to the end. His perception was as keen as ever, and his indomitable

spirit never left him.

It has already been remarked that the closing days of Pherozeshah's life were in a sense among the happiest. He was weary of conflict and anxious to co-operate, and he found in the changing spirit of the times, and in the advent of a Governor with liberal ideas, opportunities for which he had long sought in vain.

Two notable events which took place in March and July of 1915 were to gladden still further the closing stages of a long and dazzling career. The Corporation, which was largely his creation, celebrated its Golden Jubilee on March 2, and it was a matter of infinite satisfaction to Pherozeshah that he had lived to see the day and to be present at the banquet held in honour of the event. The brilliant gathering which had assembled on the occasion received with enthusiasm the graceful reference made to him by the President, Sir Fazulbhoy Currimbhoy:

"Of the great heroes of our municipal history, one is here tonight, Sir Pherozeshah, still full of fight and vigour, a kind of perpetual reminder to us that service to one's city and country is the most honourable of all things."

As Pherozeshah rose to propose the toast of the President, he met with a reception the cordiality of which could not have failed to touch him. It was in that very Hall that he had fought the bitterest fights and won the greatest triumphs of his career. He had made many enemies; he had estranged some friends. In the minds of those present, however, there was but one predominant thought, and that was the immensity of the debt which the City and the Corporation owed him.

The speech was in his best after-dinner manner. The Governor, who was present on the occasion, had spoken of the brake often applied by the members to the progressive

policy of the municipal executive. Pherozeshah, in his happiest vein, promptly replied to the charge and pointed out that if the Commissioners were liberal, it was because they put their hands in other people's pockets while the poor Corporation had to put its hands in its own! His Excellency, he added, had drawn an imaginary picture. It was only by close co-operation between the Commissioners and the Councillors that the progress and development of Bombay had been rendered possible. This praise of his colleagues and the executive did not, however, prevent the audience from realizing that the speaker had done more than all the Commissioners and Councillors put together to make the municipal administration of Bombay a model for the whole of India.

Carlyle has said that all history is biography. While this represents but a half-truth, it may safely be said that the history of the Bombay Corporation during the first fifty years of its eventful career was largely the biography of Pherozeshah Mehta.

In July, the Bombay University decided to confer on Pherozeshah the degree of Doctor of Laws, an honour which it had very sparingly and grudgingly bestowed in the past. The proposition, moved in the Syndicate by Sir Narayan Chandavarkar, referred to Pherozeshah's 'scholarship and his eminent public services ranging over a period of nearly 50 years, especially in respect of measures affecting the cause of local self-government, sanitation and education'. Pherozeshah wrote from Deolali, accepting the honour and tendering his thanks to the Senate. His venerable *guru*, Dadabhai Naoroji, was to be similarly honoured. It was a graceful, if very belated, recognition of the life-long labours of Pherozeshah in the field of education. Though not in any sense a man of profound scholarship, he had

rendered the University meritorious services.

The degree was never conferred. When the resolution was passed in the Senate, the shadow of death was already hanging over Pherozeshah, and he passed away before the honour was actually bestowed.

While there was so much to be thankful for in the final stages of the journey that was fast drawing to a close, there was a question before the country of considerable importance which greatly exercised Pherozeshah's mind and in the settlement of which he would have undoubtedly taken a notable part, had his life been spared.

It was the old question of the fusion of the Moderates and the Extremists. For some time past, a few leaders on either side had been actively endeavouring to find a common platform. After seven years of wandering in the wilderness, the Extremists were anxious to return to the fold. As Pherozeshah and others had foreseen, they had discovered that so long as they were kept outside the Congress, their influence over the country was greatly circumscribed. They had made frequent attempts at re-union and suggested various ingenious compromises; but the firmness and sagacity of some of the leaders of the Congress, particularly in Bombay, had succeeded in keeping them at arm's length.

Latterly, however, there was a growing desire to make up the differences and close the ranks, and Gokhale, Madan Mohan Malaviya and others had shown themselves anxious to facilitate the admission of their opponents on terms which would be acceptable to them and which would ensure at the same time the integrity of the Congress.

By Article XX of the Congress Constitution, the right of electing delegates was strictly limited to certain recognized associations and public bodies. No one who did not subscribe to the creed and was not elected by such bodies

directly or at public meetings convened by them, could find admission as a delegate. The compromise, favoured by Gokhale, was that all associations which accepted the creed of the Congress, whether they were affiliated or not, should have the right of election, either at their own meetings or at public meetings held under their auspices. He was influenced by the thought that the Extremists were beginning to see things from a new angle and that a genuine rapprochement was possible.

Before the Congress met at Madras in 1914, Mrs. Besant and several others came down to discuss matters with Gokhale. Negotiations with Tilak's party went on at the same time, and there was talk of a Round Table Conference between the Extremists and the Moderates. All this while, Pherozeshah kept aloof and disapproved of Gokhale's talks with the leaders on the other side. More than ever he felt convinced of the undesirability of union with a party whose policy he condemned and whose methods he distrusted. Justification of his attitude was to come from Gokhale himself. In a letter which he had written to Bhupendranath Basu a fortnight before the Madras Congress, outlining the reasons for the efforts he had been making, he had at the end to confess to a bitter sense of disillusionment:

"My hope was that if we enabled the seceders by such relaxations to come in, they would, having seen the impossibility of political action on any other lines, cooperate with us in furthering the programme of the Congress by present methods. That hope, however, has now been shattered. Mr. Tilak has told Mr. Subba Rao frankly and in unequivocal terms that though he accepts the position laid down in what is known as the Congress Creed, viz., that the aim of the Congress is the attainment by India

of self-government within the empire by constitutional means, he does not believe in the present methods of the Congress, which rest on association with Government where possible and opposition to it where necessary.

"In place of these he wants to substitute the method of opposition to Government, pure and simple with constitutional limits—in other words a policy of Irish obstruction. We, on our side, are agitating for a larger and larger share in the Government of the country—in the Legislative Councils, on Municipal and Local Boards, in public services and so forth. Mr. Tilak wants to address only one demand to the Government here and to the British public in England, viz., for the concession of self-government to India, and till that is conceded, he would urge his countrymen to have nothing to do with either the public services or Legislative Councils or Local and Municipal Bodies. And by organizing obstruction to Government in every possible direction within the limits of the laws of the land, he hopes to be able to bring the administration to a standstill and compel the authorities to capitulate. This is briefly his programme, and he says that he wants to work for its realization through the Congress if he and his followers are enabled to rejoin it, or, failing this, by starting a new organization to be called the National League."

Tilak supplemented this frank statement of his policy by explaining that his purpose in seeking re-admission into the Congress fold was to strive for effecting such changes in the rules as would throw open the privilege of election as delegate practically to every body, as before 1907, and then for getting the Congress to endorse his programme by securing at its sessions the attendance of a majority of delegates of his way of thinking.

To Pherozeshah, this exposition of the aims of the

Nationalist leaders did not come as a surprise. He had throughout kept them at arm's length, uninfluenced by any sentimental considerations in favour of a united Congress. And he was determined that so long as matters rested with him he would save the Congress from being captured by the other side.

It was a critical period in India's history. Her partnership with the allied nations in the great world-struggle for freedom that was taking place on the blood-stained fields of France had established her claim to a place in the Commonwealth such as she had not conjured up in her wildest dreams. It had given her claims strength and reality and had lifted her demand for self-government into the region of practical politics. At such a time, it was a matter of supreme importance that the direction of the Congress should be in firm and sagacious hands, and Pherozeshah had accordingly given a mandate to two or three of his friends to arrange for the 1915 session being held in Bombay where he could control every phase of the movement.

But with his passing, a few weeks before the holding of the Bombay session, the way was made smooth for the amendment of the Congress constitution, and the Extremists walked in. Their triumph was speedy and complete. When the next split took place, it was the Moderates who had to walk out.

How far the history of these times would have been differently written if the old lion had been alive, it would be idle to speculate. It is significant, however, that the union should have come about only when the strong purpose, the clear vision and the unbending will, which had so long stood between the two contending factions, were no more. With the death of Pherozeshah, the party he had so long led disappeared as a political force, and a tide of mili-

tant nationalism swept the country and drawned the voice of reason and moderation.

It was at such a momentous period in the history of India, and while his hand was still on the pulse of civic and national life that Pherozeshah passed away. It was his good fortune not to lag superfluous on the stage, and he died while still in the plenitude of his powers.

The first symptoms of a definite breakdown were noticed in June 1914 when his heart began to give trouble. His connection with the Central Bank at a time when it was passing through a severe financial crisis, and the close personal supervision he exercised over the conduct of *The Bombay Chronicle,* which he regarded as the last achievement of his career, had added greatly to the burden on his overladen shoulders, and told heavily on his system.

Physically a nervous man, Pherozeshah shrank from an examination by any specialist, and treated the complaint with various nostrums suggested to him from time to time. A friend's recommendation had succeeded in inducing even an application of Oriental Balm! Gladstone once said of Bright that 'he did nothing he should do to preserve his health, and everything he should not'. That was, in a sense, true of Pherozeshah as well. He was extremely careful in his habits, and sometimes absurdly punctilious. And yet, when things went wrong, no man so trifled with his health as he.

After keeping out of Bombay for practically the latter half of 1915, he returned to the City in January of the following year, very little better for the comparative rest he had enjoyed for six long months. The death of Gokhale within a few weeks after his return caused him a shock and kept him very depressed. In April he went to Matheran, and stayed there a couple of months. About this time, the

old kidney troubles attacked him again and caused him acute pain. On examination, he was found to be suffering from a cancerous tumour and it was evident that the end was approaching.

The next few months were spent between Deolali and Poona. The only time he was in Bombay was for a couple of days in August when he came down to attend the Convocaton of the University. It was to be his first public appearance as Vice-Chancellor and large numbers of people went to the Hall to see him. To the keen disappointment of everybody, Pherozeshah failed to put in an appearance. He had come down specially to attend the function, and it had been arranged that he was to take perfect rest and to reserve himself for the occasion. Unfortunately, he took it into his head a day previous to go to a meeting of the Corporation. He was unequal to the strain and he spent that night in pain and restlessness which made attendance at the Convocation impossible.

Even in those days, his mind was as active as ever, and though it was not possible to maintain personal touch with everything that was going on, nothing could be done without consulting him in matters of importance. None ventured to think he was a dying force. Indeed, he was looking forward to the approaching session of the Congress at Bombay where he hoped firmly and finally to establish the principles for which he had always stood.

But, as misfortune would have it, his condition speedily grew worse, and he finally returned to Bombay from Poona on October 24. The Sunday after his return, he held his usual levee and saw numbers of his friends at his place. That was the last they saw of him. His strength rapidly declined, and though he moved about the house and pursued his daily habits and did not neglect even his elaborate

toilet, he shut himself in and received no one.

He never discussed his trouble, not even with the devoted wife who looked after him with unremitting care. Though he kept somewhat depressed and silent, no note of sadness or despair escaped him. The fortitude which he displayed in these last few days extorted the admiration of the eminent surgeon who attended him in his final illness.

On the morning of November 5, Pherozeshah rose as usual, took his coffee and read his papers and correspondence. The doctors came at about 10 in the morning, examined him and found nothing very unusual. Shortly after they had left, he was seen standing near the bed, seized with a spasm of the heart. He said not a word to those who rushed to his assistance, but quietly allowed himself to be moved into the bed. Dr. Masina, who was one of the doctors attending on him, was immediately sent for. He arrived at the bedside within a few minutes. He spoke to the dying man, who answered him with an effort. Some brandy was administered but it had no effect. A few moments later, without a struggle or a sigh, Pherozeshah breathed his last.

The news spread like wild fire through the city. Though the end was not unexpected, it came as a shock to most people when it did arrive. It was hard to believe that the towering figure which had dominated the stage for more than a generation was no more.

Public sorrow over the event was profound and universal. The Municipal and University offices were at once closed, as were a great many other institutions. Almost from the moment the news became known, a continual stream of visitors called at the residence at Nepean Sea Road to condole with Lady Mehta and the family, and to have a last look at the departed leader. Most of those who had

loyally followed him through life were there, many deeply and visibly affected. His lifelong friend and colleague, Dinshaw Wacha, who was among the earliest to call, broke down with emotion, and while leaving had to be assisted down the stairs.

The funeral was most impressive, being largely attended by men representing every class of the cosmopolitan population of Bombay. Lord Willingdon was represented by one of the Secretaries to Government. Everyone in the gathering looked grave and subdued, as if in the presence of a great calamity. As the funeral procession emerged from the house, people who had gathered outside bowed their heads in reverence. The cortege slowly wended its way, followed by an immense crowd, to the Towers of Silence; and as it came to the spot beyond which none but Parsis are allowed to go, Chandavarkar paid a warm and feeling tribute to Pherozeshah's memory. Dinshaw Wacha attempted to follow, but his feelings overcame him and he could not utter a word. Altogether, the homage that the people of Bombay paid to the departed leader was in keeping with the place he had in their hearts.

In the days which followed, attempts were made in the Press all over the country and from a hundred platforms to give expression to the magnitude of the loss which the nation had sustained. Writers and politicians of all shades of opinion bore testimony to the personal and intellectual gifts which had given Pherozeshah the commanding position he had so long enjoyed. *The Statesman*, *The Amrita Bazar Patrika* and *The Englishman* were almost as appreciative as the most loyal adherents of his political creed. *The Bengalee*, which had been a more friendly discriminating critic, wrote that a prince and a great man had fallen and a nation was in mourning.

The tribute paid by Tilak, coming as it did from a man whom Pherozeshah regarded as his bitterest political opponent, calls for special mention. "His supreme virtue was fearlessness. Once he made up his mind about some public question and defined his policy, he stuck to it with dauntless determination and no power on earth could dislodge him from his position. He never knew hesitation, equivocation or prevarication. His intellectual eminence, legal and constitutional acumen and political shrewdness shone all the more brightly because of their foundation on resolute intrepidity."

At a memorial meeting held in London at Caxton Hall on December 10, political opponents like Lord Harris, Ameer Ali, Bhownuggree and Lovat Fraser gathered together to honour the memory of Pherozeshah. The Aga Khan presided.

Lord Harris, who moved the principal resolution, observed that Pherozeshah and he had been opponents on many public questions, but he could say that while Pherozeshah was 'a most resolute fighter, keen in argument and firm in adhering to his principles he was as fair a fighter as he had ever met, either in England or India'.

It was but natural that the loss which the nation had sustained should be most deeply felt in Bombay where, for over a generation, he had exercised a dominant influence over her many-sided activities. For more years than one cared to recall, there had hardly been a movement of any importance which had either not been initiated, guided or controlled by him. And Bombay had been supremely happy in the possession of her 'uncrowned king'. Through his personality and achievements, he had raised her status and importance, and secured for her pride of place in the country. Though regarded as an autocrat, the power he

wielded had been exercised on the whole with remarkable restraint and judgment. It was, therefore, with a feeling akin to dismay that Bombay learnt that he was no more. And yet, the full import of the event could not be grasped at the moment of its occurrance.

As *The Bombay Chronicle* observed:

"The time indeed is not yet when we can adequately appreciate it. As the years go on, and we miss his guiding presence, his eagle-eyed watchfulness over the public interest, his fearless lead in the civic or political arena, his commanding personality and the healthy liberal atmosphere which he brought into every discussion or controversy, we shall look back to the days when he was among us and realize, perhaps, in its just measure, all that he did for his city, for his country, for the empire."

It is easy to exaggerate the virtues of the dead. Too often we find justified the witty adaptation of the old tag, 'de mortuis nihil nishi bunkum'. In the case of Pherozeshah, however, the difficulty was to find words which could fittingly describe his many-sided career and personality.

The Times of India's parting tribute came nearer than any other to being the most adequate. It spoke of his great services to the people in many fields of activity and of the courage and resource with which he handled the affairs of the country in the critical days which followed the 'debacle' at Surat, of the spirit with which he fought, reminding one of the best traits of English public life, of his unconquerable optimism and his unshakable faith, amidst much wringing of hands, in the blessings of the British connection. It was, however, as 'a great Bombay citizen' that Pherozeshah would be best and longest remembered:

"In his devotion to Bombay he was, we think we may

say without exaggeration, the greatest citizen any city has ever produced. He gave to it his best for over forty years. Nor, with the wider field now open to Indian publicists and the growth of a more materialistic spirit, is he ever likely to find a successor...It is a truism to say that no man in this world is indispensable. It is a humbling lesson to see how rapidly the places of the most distinguished men are filled. But with these thoughts before us, it is equally true to say that Sir Pherozeshah's place in the life of Bombay will never be filled...We all feel the poorer by his death."

The remarkable memorial meeting of the citizens of Bombay, which took place a little later, provided a fitting culmination to the demonstrations of popular feeling which marked the death of Pherozeshah. It was held on December 10, 1915, in the *shamiana* which had been erected for the forthcoming session of the Congress; it was felt that the Town Hall would prove too small for an occasion which was expected to draw citizens in their thousands.

Seldom has Bombay witnessed such an imposing demonstration of popular regard. Long before the hour fixed for the meeting, the spacious *shamiana* was filled by a gathering of well over 10,000 people, representatives of every community and interest in the cosmopolitan life of Bombay. Lord Willingdon was in the chair, and supporting him on the platform were Lady Willingdon, the Gaekwad of Baroda and a distinguished company of leading citizens from all parts of the Presidency.

At the outset, the Chairman read a telegram from Lord Hardinge, who desired to associate himself with the people of Bombay on this occasion. The message spoke of Pherozeshah as 'a great Parsi, a great citizen, a great patriot and a great Indian' whom India could ill-afford to lose.

especially in the difficult times through which she was passing. The speech of Lord Willingdon was characteristically felicitous and generous in tone.

As a demonstration of popular feeling, the meeting was altogether unique. Never had Bombay seen such a gathering of her citizens. It was a tribute worthy of her and of the man who had devoted to her for more than forty years all that was best in him and who had enriched and exalted her public life and helped to raise her to the proud position of the first city in India and the second in the Empire.

FINAL

IN assessing Pherozeshah's public career, it is essential to remember that many of his principles were formed by his early training and environment. He had the good fortune to receive his education at the hands of a scholar of great attainments and singular breadth of view. When he went to England, it was with a mind fully equipped to receive the ideas and impressions which the West has to impart.

While studying for the Bar, he came under the influence of Dadabhai Naoroji, who inspired him with his own burning love of the country and enthusiasm for the cause of progress and liberty. The young disciple was deeply interested in the world around him and the social and political forces that were at work.

He came under the influence of the liberalism of the times, and his faith in its principles remained unimpaired to the end, despite many disappointments. It was 'an agitated and expectant age', as Mr. Gladstone called it, and its teachings deeply impressed themselves on his youthful mind.

Pherozeshah's temperament, equally with his early training, was a great asset. He was a robust optimist, and he faced the problems of the day with serene courage and confidence. The hatred of enemies, the indifference of friends and the hostility of those in power and authority failed to shake his faith in the ultimate triumph of the cause he espoused and in the principles and methods by which he pursued it.

His literary tastes fostered this outlook on life. Dickens,

Thackeray, Tennyson and the Bible were his favourites, and he carried these old friends with him wherever he went In a conversation which he had shortly before his death with Chandavarkar, he said: "There is some solace in life, isn't there, when you call a small company of books like that your friends who have stood by you all through?"

Cheery optimism sustained Pherozeshah through all difficulties and disappointments in his long and arduous career. It sustained him through the early struggles of the Congress when he and his associates had to contend with hostility and ridicule on the one hand and indifference and backsliding on the other. It sustained him through the dark and anxious days which followed the partition of Bengal when despair and despondency seized men's minds and turned them aside from the paths of peaceful evolution. It sustained him through the grave crisis in national affairs precipitated by the debacle at Surat. Through all these difficult and often critical situations, while other men shrank back or wavered, he never lost heart, never felt shaken in his allegiance to the ideals and principles which he had made his own.

He was a firm believer, like many others of his generation, in the benefits of the British connection. No man more mercilessly exposed the defects, shortcomings and injustice which have often characterized the British administration of India, no man more courageously fought for the enlargement of the rights and liberties of the people. And yet, there was none who upheld the British connection more stoutly than he, recognizing as he did the weakness of his country's position and the essential justice and humanity, despite many lapses, of England's rule in India. Allied to this was his deep-seated respect for constituted authority which his early training had implanted in him. This was most strik-

ingly exemplified in his civic career. While there was no critic of the administration more feared than he, the executive officers had no warmer supporter of their prestige and authority.

The distinguishing traits of Pherozeshah's methods of controversy were fearlessness, a keen sense of fair play and a regard for the decencies of public life. He hit out with refreshing vigour, but his denunciations were singularly free from mere aggressiveness or cheap rhetoric. His strength lay in the directness and uncompromising independence with which he expressed himself. From the days of Sir James Westland with his famous outburst about the introduction of the 'new spirit', officials in the Councils learnt to treat Pherozeshah with wholesome respect. Sometimes, however, they allowed their irritation to overcome them and lead them to personal attacks, as was done by Sir Fredrick Lely and Mr. Logan in the Bombay Council on occasions well remembered by all who witnessed the encounter. They never ventured to repeat the experiment, for the trouncing they got was not easily to be forgotten. And yet, in spite of the fact that Pherozeshah spent all his life in giving and receiving hard blows, he did not allow his sense of fair play to be blunted. He never hit below the belt. On the rare occasions on which he allowed himself to be carried away into making a hasty statement, he withdrew it as soon as his attention was drawn to its unfairness.

He scrupulously observed the best traditions of public life, and was not wanting in generous appreciation of his opponents whenever the occasion demanded it. The readiness with which he acknowledged their good intentions and met all attempts at co-operation or conciliation was in striking contrast to the general tendencies of the time.

The maturity of thought Pherozeshah showed at an early age was remarkable. The views which he expressed on educational problems when quite a young man were the views from which he found no occasion to differ throughout his career, and they invite comparison with his latest reflections on the subject.

His thoughts on municipal reform when he was barely twenty-five reveal the same maturity of mind, and might be said to be actually embodied in a municipal constitution which in its essentials has survived for fifty years. So also with his views on reforms in the Civil Service, and the benefits of India's participation in party politics. In all this, he was often largely in advance of his times and in conflict with the opinions of men older and more experienced than himself.

The qualities which may be said to have contributed most to Pherozeshah's supremacy in public affairs were his intuitive judgment and his firm grasp of principles. His career provides many instances—his views on the Press Act and the South African problem are among the most recent—of his political sagacity and the gift he had of seeing further than any of his contemporaries. It was largely owing to this that his colleagues often subordinated their views to his, even when they felt he was in the wrong. They invariably found that his judgment was sounder, his instinct surer.

For those who would lead their fellowmen through the dust and heat of political controversies, a certain gift of speech is more or less essential. Pherozeshah possessed it in ample measure. His oratory was characterized by considerable variety. The sonorous eloquence of his set speeches had a mid-Victorian flavour. It delighted the crowds who hung on his words on the Congress platform or in Town

Hall. But his strength did not lie in that. There were other men, notably Surendranath Bannerji and Lal Mohun Ghosh, who excelled him in sheer eloquence. None, however, approached him except at respectful distance, in powers of debate, in the swift, decisive and masterly manner in which he floored an opponent. Quick to see the weak points of the case against him, he brought to bear on them all the resources of a capacious and well-trained intellect, and banter and ridicule generally finished what arguments left unaccomplished.

Men felt themselves helpless as they listened to him and got convinced, sometimes against the evidence of their own senses. Thus it was that he bore down all opposition, whether on the floor of the University and the Corporation Hall or in the Subjects Committee of the Congress, where he encountered some of the finest intellect in the country. People spoke of him as an autocrat. Perhaps he was, but when we see so many lesser men trying to lay down the law, we can appreciate the moderation with which, on the whole, Pherozeshah wielded the immense power which he enjoyed.

An ardent lover of progress and liberty, Pherozeshah was strongly conservative in his outlook on some of the problems of the day. The love of ordered progress which his well-balanced mind and early training instilled into him made him averse to all violent or sudden changes. Deeply imbued with the teachings of English history, he had a profound reverence for constitutional forms and an abiding faith in the virtue of gradual and peaceful evolution, of 'freedom slowly broadening down from precedent to precedent'.

Always making the most of what he got, even if, as invariably happened, it fell short of what he had fought

for, he set himself immediately to prepare for the next advance. He did not worry about the distant goal but strove for what he thought the country was prepared for and had a right to demand, never doubting it would achieve its destiny in the process of time.

Pherozeshah was far and away the greatest political leader India had known. He never appealed to the masses as did Dadabhai Naoroji or Tilak, for instance. His hold was mainly over the educated and thinking section of the people. His impressive presence, personality and powers of mind dominated all who worked with him or followed his lead. As was observed of Gladstone, 'when he spoke, he uplifted debate from whatever rut of mediocrity it may have fallen into. That was the power of the orator. When he sat silent, his mere presence communicated to the House a sense of dignity and a moral strength easier to feel than to describe. That was the quality of the man'.

It was remarkable how the many gifted men with whom Pherozeshah was associated in various spheres of public life allowed their will and judgment to be subordinated to him. The wail of the Punjab delegate that his personality dominated everybody faithfully represented the feelings of those who often differed from him and yet found themselves helpless in his presence.

This supremacy becomes all the more remarkable when we think of the men over whom it was exercised. There were some who were in no way inferior to Pherozeshah in vigour of intellect; there were others who closely rivalled him in gifts of speech and independence of character. There was none, however, who combined in him so many of the qualities which compel the admiration and command the allegiance of one's fellowmen; and in that, apart from that undefinable something called personality,

must be found an explanation of Pherozeshah's dominance over all who came in contact with him.

There were men who occupied themselves in his later days with instituting comparisons between him and Gokhale. Nothing could have been more foolish. The truth is that each did work complementary to that of the other and what the other was probably not capable of accomplishing. Gokhale certainly could not have roused, as well as Pherozeshah did, the intelligentsia of the country from the apathy and even hostility with which a large section of it regarded the national movement. Gokhale could not have stood up as resolutely and as courageously as Pherozeshah did against injustice, oppression or autocracy. On the other hand, Pherozeshah was temperamentally incapable of the active and sustained educative work which Gokhale did from day to day, and the propaganda he carried on both in England and in India, and which owed its success as much to his high character as to his attainments. Comparisons between two such men are meaningless. Each was great in his own sphere, and together they made a notable contribution to the building up of the New India of which Dadabhai Naoroji had laid the foundations.

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